

# Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors

CULTURE, POWER, AND CONNECTIONS, 580–800



Jonathan Karam Skaff

Sui-Tang China and  
Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors

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and Connections, 580–800*

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580–800*

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JONATHAN KARAM SKAFF

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*To three brave warriors:  
Karam, Donna, and Kassiani*

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## CONVENTIONS OF TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

Chinese is transliterated using standard pinyin romanization. Chinese names and words that are homonyms include tone marks to distinguish them from each other. In transcriptions and translations of fragmentary documents, gaps in the text are indicated by [ . . . ]. Unless otherwise noted, Chinese official titles and administrative units are translated according to Hucker (1985). Arabic is rendered according to the standard convention. I follow Beckwith's systems (1987, xiii–xiv) of transliterating Tibetan and Turkic with the exception that Turkic *ś* is replaced with *sh*. In some cases I probably have unwittingly deviated from Beckwith's system due to the confusion caused by the variety of Turkic transliteration methods and the failure of many authors to specify which one they use. I have followed the scholarly convention of using the spelling "Türk" to distinguish the tribe and empire of medieval Mongolia from the "Turk" nationality of modern Turkey (Beckwith 2009, 116, n. 12). Medieval Turko-Mongol names reconstructed from Chinese that have gained general scholarly acceptance have been adopted. Even if these reconstructions are not perfect, they will be closer to the original pronunciation than pinyin renderings in modern Chinese.

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Sui-Tang China and  
Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors

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## Introduction

# The China-Inner Asia Frontier as World History

*It is high time to set about breaking down the outmoded topographical compartments within which we seek to confine social realities, for they are not large enough to hold the material we try to cram into them.*

—Marc Bloch (*Address to the International Congress of Historical Sciences, August 1928*)

Over eighty years after Bloch admonished historians to give greater attention to transnational history, we only have reached the early stages of understanding the entangled histories of China and Inner Asia. The topographical compartments of China and Inner Asia are still popularly considered to be irrevocably separate and hostile. China had a huge farming populace, which by premodern standards yielded enormous amounts of wealth and manpower. In contrast, the deserts and steppe of Inner Asia supported sparse populations of pastoral nomads and oasis farmers. Chinese agriculturists, whose staple product was grain, are normally regarded as distinct from pastoral nomads who raised large livestock—such as sheep, horses, cattle, and goats—that can subsist on the grasslands. Chinese farmers were sedentary, while nomads lived in tents as they migrated with their flocks. Militarily, this confrontation typically is depicted as a battle between large Chinese infantry armies of conscripted peasants versus smaller and swifter Inner Asian forces composed of cavalry. Ideologically, Chinese and steppe rulers also fought battles of words by negatively stereotyping each other. The polemics of state-level foreign relations have deeply influenced conventional, exclusivist perceptions of China and Inner Asia as irreconcilable.

This book takes a different “integrationist” perspective by reexamining relations between the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) Empires and neighboring Turko-Mongol pastoral nomadic peoples in the period from about 580 to 800. Particular attention is given to the successive Turkic khanates based in Mongolia, especially the First Türk (552–630) and Second Türk (682–742) Empires. Heeding Bloch’s



call (1969) for a comparative methodology, this book argues that these China-based and Mongolia-based states had “entangled histories” resulting from centuries of diplomacy, competition, and incorporation of pastoral nomads in North China.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, medieval Eastern Eurasian powers deployed strikingly similar elements of ideology, diplomacy, and political networking to seek hegemony over each other and the smaller Turko-Mongol tribes inhabiting the intervening borderlands. This book also reveals the existence of shared diplomatic norms in the wider sphere of Eurasia from Korea in the east to Byzantium and Iran in the west. Agents perpetuating medieval political, economic, and cultural entanglements included not only the more familiar Silk Road monks, merchants, and diplomats, but also Turko-Mongol pastoral nomads of the Eurasian steppe.

## I. Method and Theory

The tendency to see China’s culture as distinctive derives in part from conventional methodologies of historical scholarship. Historians of premodern China—with the notable exception of many frontier specialists—normally carry out research exclusively by using Chinese sources, and make comparisons between earlier and later dynasties to achieve a diachronic understanding of Chinese history. This approach began with premodern scholars who had a deep reverence for classical texts and historical precedent (Bol 1992, 1–5, 191–201; Skaff 2009b, 170–6), was incorporated into modern Sinology in the early twentieth century, and aligned with the normal practice of professional historians to take the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis. The conventional China-centered methods are alluring because premodern Chinese records are relatively copious, and chronological comparisons are useful for understanding historical change.<sup>2</sup> However, overreliance on this approach has resulted in “frog in the well syndrome.” The proverbial Chinese frog at the bottom of the well (*jingdi zhi wa*) was complacent because of his ignorance of the world outside. Studies of premodern China often suffer from this syndrome. Historians who exclusively utilize Chinese language sources and chronological comparisons perpetuate a fallacy, common to national histories, that Chinese identity and history are unique products of internal evolution (Fischer 1970, 142–4, 226–30). Methodologically, this book forestalls “frog in the well syndrome” with an interdisciplinary, multi-perspective, and synchronically comparative approach that provides a more balanced perspective on relations between the Sui-Tang Empires and various Turko-Mongol peoples.

The interdisciplinary and multi-perspective aspects of the methodology derive from the choice of sources. The foundations of research are standard Sinological texts, including Sui-Tang dynastic and annalistic histories and central governmental documents preserved in literary and administrative compendia.<sup>3</sup> Although yielding relatively copious information by medieval norms, these records have hindered

understanding of the Sui-Tang frontier relations because they reflect the perspectives of the authors, the literati-Confucian elite stationed in the capitals, which will be discussed in chapter 2. Their court-centered viewpoint encourages “frog in the well syndrome” because it downplays the importance of foreign peoples, and of provincial and frontier affairs. To overcome these drawbacks, this book supplements court-centered sources with excavated Tang documents and funerary epitaphs, non-Chinese sources, and modern archaeological and anthropological scholarship. Modern archaeological discoveries have been particularly helpful in providing evidence—including documents, tomb epitaphs, and material culture—that reveals signs of cultural interactions between China and Inner Asia.<sup>4</sup> Additional information on the activities of Turko-Mongols and other Eurasian peoples was obtained through research in Arabic annals in the original language, and English translations of Turkic inscriptions and Byzantine chronicles.<sup>5</sup> Modern historical and ethnographic studies on pastoral nomads also were helpful in explaining and contextualizing laconic descriptions of Turko-Mongol behavior contained in medieval texts. Though the chronological scope of research runs from approximately 580 to 800—from around the founding of the Sui Dynasty through the reign of Tang Dezong—particular attention is given to the best-documented early to mid-Tang period of 630 to 755.<sup>6</sup> Taken together, these sources provide a more holistic depiction of Sui-Tang frontier society, Turko-Mongol peoples, and patterns of interstate relations.

Sources furnishing multiple perspectives facilitate another aspect of the book’s methodology, synchronic comparisons of culture. Succeeding chapters will compare and contrast political and diplomatic practices of Sui-Tang, Turko-Mongol, and other Eurasian cultures. The building blocks of comparisons are close readings of millennium-old texts and artifacts—rather than secondary studies—with an eye to finding evidence, particularly anecdotes, that reveals the actual thought and behavior of people living in China and Inner Asia. The research methodology draws inspiration from Clifford Geertz’s ethnographic “thick description” (1973, 5, 9–10, 17), which views culture as “webs of significance” that are articulated “through the flow of behavior.”<sup>7</sup> Interpretation involves “sorting out the structures of signification . . . and determining their social ground and import.” Geertz even likens the challenges of the ethnographer to the historian reading manuscripts “full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries.” Both must discern the “socially established code” scattered among the individual quirks and unique events. The historian’s more specialized interpretive task is to determine which cultural forms reflect actual thought and behavior of historical actors, and which are products of the idealized worldview of medieval authors.

Evidence gleaned from texts was subject to comparative historical analysis to identify what the sociologist Jack Goldstone calls “robust processes” (1991, 50–62) and the historian C. A. Bayly (2004, 1–14, 41–4) terms “uniformities.” The former, which should be distinguished from determinism, refers to events at different times and/or different locations where similar causal factors can trigger

similar outcomes.<sup>8</sup> A simple example is the recurring invention of sacral kingship in ancient states that were geographically isolated from one another. In contrast to robust processes, uniformities describe interconnected social phenomena. Different from homogeneity, uniformities were widely shared elements of culture that developed as “forms of human action adjusted to each other and came to resemble each other” even as these interactions paradoxically reinforced distinctive identities. For example, in the modern world, national flags are uniformities, universally expected of every country, but each has a unique design that ideally epitomizes a specific national experience and identity. Though mainly focused on early modern globalization, Bayly (2002, 2004, 40–1) recognizes that uniformities existed in the era of “archaic globalization.” The distinguishing feature of archaic uniformities was their gradual spread on subcontinental and transcontinental scales, relatively modest in comparison to the frenetic globalization of today.<sup>9</sup> Since the major trends in Eurasian uniformities emerged prior to the time period covered in this book, the search for their origins will not be a major concern. However, the role of ongoing Eurasian entanglements in sparking the replication and modification of uniformities will become apparent.

## II. China-Inner Asia Relations

This book’s focus on comparative perspectives contributes to the integrationist trend in Chinese historical scholarship, which is challenging the former dominant paradigm of China-Inner Asia relations, the so-called “Chinese worldview.” Promoted by the prominent historian John King Fairbank in the 1960s and still holding sway over the popular imagination, the Chinese worldview appropriates the assumption of national history that China was not only the product of internal, evolutionary development, but also a dominant “culture island” assimilating other peoples living on the periphery through the power of “sinicization” (Fairbank 1968). Since the 1980s, historians of the integrationist school, aligned with the broader world history movement, have contested the implicit chauvinism of the Chinese worldview. However, their rejection of notions of China’s perpetual political dominance and cultural influence are based almost exclusively on studies of dynasties founded by external conquerors, particularly the Qing (1644–1911).<sup>10</sup> This book breaks new ground by focusing on the Sui and Tang dynasties, involving entanglements with Eurasia that were not necessarily connected to conquests from outside of China.

The book’s fresh perspective on China-Inner Asia relations allows a challenge to a corollary assumption of the Chinese worldview that has received less critical scrutiny. This is the idea that cultural sharing in East Asia mainly occurred in a “Sinic zone” that included China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Fairbank 1968, 12). Within this region Chinese writing was adopted, allowing the sharing of China’s

high culture of literary, historical, philosophical, religious, and ritual traditions. Tang China often is viewed as the height of Chinese cultural exportation (Twitchett, ed. 1979b, 32–8). Most germane to this study, Sinic diplomacy was conceived of as a “tributary system” in which vassals bestowed tribute to Chinese emperors in exchange for valuable gifts and titles indicating their subservience. Fairbank contrasts the Sinic peoples with those of Inner Asia who “had their own non-Chinese views of the relationship to China and accepted the Chinese view of it only in part, superficially or tacitly, as a matter of expedience.” Like Fairbank, most scholars conclude that China-based rulers ignored Confucian ideology to act “pragmatically” in external affairs, parallel to the “expediency” of foreigners, but have not questioned the Sinic origins of the ideology and diplomatic praxis (Franke and Twitchett, eds. 1994, 14–6; Hevia 1995, 11–5, 29–56; Millward 1998, 49, 194–202; Pan 1997, 62–5; Rossabi 1983, 1–12; Wright 2005, 35–8). In contrast, this book offers the hypothesis that the Sinic zone of Chinese textual culture was nested inside a broader “Eastern Eurasian” region of political and diplomatic uniformities, which in turn was contained within a wider “Eurasian” sphere via links with South Asia, West Asia, and Byzantium. Inner Asia played a key role connecting all major regions via its trade routes and steppe zone stretching from Manchuria to Eastern Europe.

Geographically, Eastern Eurasia will be defined as the vast territory encompassing the Sinic zone plus Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and interspersed regions of Inner Asian steppe and desert oases as far west as the Pamir Mountains. Most of the book’s evidence derives from Sui-Tang interactions with Turko-Mongols from about 580 to 800. Other Eurasian polities that had contacts with the Turko-Mongols studied in this book make cameo appearances including the Yarlung Dynasty of Tibet (570–842), the Byzantine Empire (476–1453), and the successive West

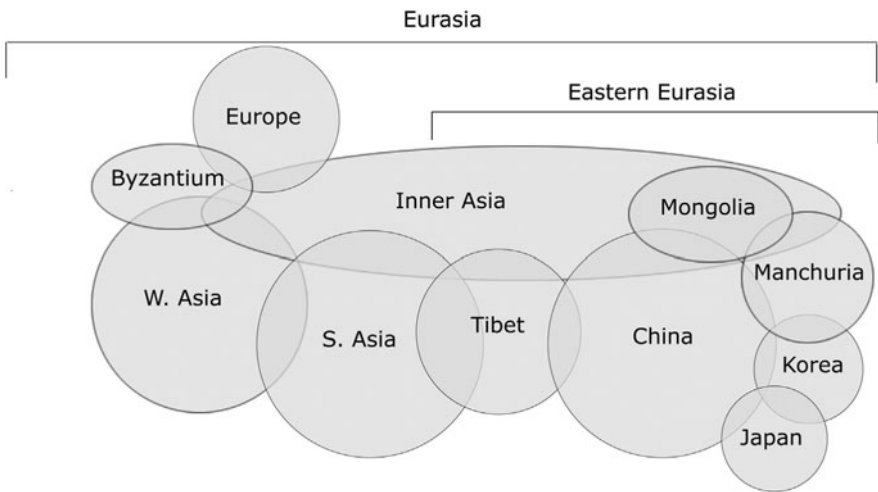


Figure 0.1. Schematic Diagram of Eurasian Cultural Zones

Asian powers of the Sasanian Dynasty (ca. 224–651) and Islamic Umayyad Caliphate (661–750).<sup>11</sup> Within Eastern Eurasia there is evidence of common notions of rulership, diplomacy, political networking, and ritual beliefs. In the wider sphere of Eurasia, uniformities in norms of rulership, diplomacy, and political networking also existed, but were more attenuated.

Succeeding chapters will argue for the prominence of mobile pastoral nomads, not necessarily traveling on Silk Roads caravan routes, in the exchange of these political ideas. David Christian (2000) notes that the Silk Roads typically are defined as east-west land and sea routes—linking the agricultural regions of East, South, and West Asia and serving as conduits transmitting luxury goods, technology, religion, and artistic motifs. This book adopts Christian’s definition and emphasizes that Silk Roads also were pathways transmitting political culture via diplomatic exchanges. More crucially, Christian argues for the equal importance of north-south, trans-ecological “Steppe Roads” linking the Eurasian grassland and agricultural regions.<sup>12</sup> Christian conceives of Steppe Roads as commercial routes, driven by a “natural” economic exchange of agricultural and pastoral products, but succeeding chapters will demonstrate that interactions also resulted from recurrent diplomatic intercourse and episodic political and environmental calamities, which could spark long-distance migrations of Turko-Mongols. These regular and irregular movements of pastoral nomads have been overlooked as contributors to exchanges of political culture in Eurasia.

### A. Eurasian Diplomacy

A comparative perspective provides a valuable lens for rethinking medieval Eurasian diplomacy. Previous research on diplomatic relations between the Sui-Tang Empires and Inner Asia has tended to take three general approaches. The first is narrative history of interstate relations with attention to strategic concerns (Beckwith 1987; Pan 1997; Twitchett 2000). The second focuses on particular features of bilateral agreements, such as horse-silk trade or diplomatic marriages (Beckwith 1991; Holmgren 1990–1; Jagchid 1989; Mackerras 1969; Pan 1992b, 1997a). The third type, termed the material school in chapter 8, places the Sui-Tang period within the *longue durée* of China-Inner relations and argues that the primary diplomatic objective of Turko-Mongols was to profit from relations with China-based regimes through trade, direct subsidies, or raiding (Barfield 1989; Di Cosmo 1999b; Jagchid and Symons 1989; Perdue 2005, 532–5). All of these approaches share the tendency to focus on particular aspects of diplomatic relations—such as geopolitical strategy, trade, marriage, or material subventions—without examining the full spectrum of considerations involved in negotiating relationships in a multilateral sphere of diplomacy. They also assume a fairly rigid cultural divide between China and Inner Asia.

This book takes a more holistic approach to diplomacy. Comparing Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol diplomatic practices reveals the existence of shared conceptions of

the form and function of interstate relations that frequently have been misidentified as products of the Chinese worldview. Diplomatic rituals, discussed in chapter 5, involved elaborate displays of pageantry, status ranking, obeisance, gift exchanges, and feasting. Chapters 6 through 8, concerning bilateral negotiations, reveal that Eurasian diplomatic talks occurred within uniform parameters. The foundation of most agreements was an investiture relationship in which a greater power bestowed a feudal title or official appointment on a lesser one to signal a truce. Depending on the needs of the two parties, bargaining also might include discussions of marriage or trade relations, subsidies, and/or military operations against mutual enemies. Monarchs—whether situated in China or Inner Asia—generally sought the most advantageous mix of political, strategic, symbolic, and material concessions from negotiating partners. When the balance of power between the two parties shifted or unexpected contingencies arose, relationships typically were renegotiated or severed in an outburst of warfare. Each bilateral negotiation was unique, but the parameters—seldom deviating from issues of investiture, kinship, finances, and/or military affairs—were uniform. In essence chapters 5 through 8 are a preliminary effort to create a handbook of customary medieval Eurasian diplomacy.

### B. Sui-Tang Cosmopolitanism

This study also contributes to understanding the social and ecological pluralism of the Sui-Tang empires. The Tang is popularly considered to be China's glorious cosmopolitan age. However, Sui-Tang scholarship contains two competing visions of history. An integrationist or cosmopolitan school depicts an inclusive society whose elites were eager to accept exotic foreign cultural elements, especially related to religion, art, music, dance, food, and material culture. On the other hand, institutional and intellectual historians have had a tendency to downplay the external impact in favor of emphasizing continuities with earlier imperial government and thought. Neither school has seemed to show much awareness of the other or the sharp dichotomy of their perspectives. The result is a schizophrenic image of Sui-Tang elites who checked their exotic tastes at the doors of their homes and turned into orthodox Confucians upon arrival at government offices.

The doyens of the integrationist school were the late Xiang Da and Edward Shafer. Xiang (2001) pioneered a cosmopolitan perspective in the 1930s and influenced Schafer (1963), whose book, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, is the most visible example of this genre in the west. Their sources often are personal ones of the literary vein, including poetry, literature, and miscellaneous writings, which reveal that the Sui-Tang elite had a taste for exotic goods and arts from other parts of Eurasia. Both scholars influentially promoted the Silk Roads as the primary avenues of cultural exchanges. Schafer wrote about foreign people and goods with relish, which has served to glamorize the dynasty. His ability to entertain readers has kept his book in print long after his death and burnished the image of the Tang as a glorious and cosmopolitan age.



A contrasting vision comes from intellectual and institutional historians who tend to downplay foreign influences and assume that “Chinese” governance was the bedrock of Sui-Tang empires. Their point-of-view reflects their sources, which normally are public ones—official histories, government documents, and philosophical or legal-bureaucratic prescriptive texts. Their diachronic comparative methodology focuses on tracing the evolving Chinese administrative organization and accompanying textual tradition that originated in tandem during the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 BCE) and Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) and continued to develop throughout the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang. Social history, when considered, is limited to examining the lives of the upper classes who manned the bureaucracy. The late Denis Twitchett (1979b, 8–22; Wright and Twitchett, eds. 1973) was the most prominent purveyor of Sui-Tang institutional scholarship in the West. Although institutional and intellectual historians, like Twitchett, acknowledge that the Tang imperial family had exotic tastes, their scholarship downplays its impact on the public realm of government.

The conflicting visions of integrationist and institutionalist schools have emerged because of a shared tendency to essentialize Sui-Tang culture. If we stop assuming that Sui-Tang society was homogenous, the contradictions can be resolved. The Sui-Tang empires were pluralistic realms containing tens of millions of people who had different ethnicities, regional traditions, status rankings, and religions. The modern institutional historians have been influenced by the Sui-Tang literati Confucians who dominated the civil bureaucracy and even more importantly the historiographical office. Their discursive power over public records has created a false impression of their dominance over governmental policy and popular culture. The integrationist school also has its limitations. It has been unable to clarify the identities of the consumers of the exotic imports or demonstrate how foreigners and indigenous ethnic minorities were politically and socially integrated into a cosmopolitan empire. In addition, integrationists have underestimated Turko-Mongols as agents of cultural exchange in favor of the caravan merchants, diplomatic envoys, artists, and religious clerics who plied the Silk Roads. Finally, there has been an overemphasis on the uniqueness of the Sui-Tang cosmopolitanism. Eurasia has a long history of people who favored cosmopolitanism in taste and interpersonal relationships. North China dynasts, ruling over multiethnic populations in the pre-Sui and post-Tang periods, shared cosmopolitan inclinations. This tendency is visible elsewhere in Eurasia and much later in history (Fewkes 2009, 163–6).

Chen Yinke (2001, 183–235) has made the most influential attempt to reconcile the perspectives of the institutional and integrationist schools. Chen recognized that from 317 onward Inner Asian conquerors and their descendants who ruled over North China oversaw the rise of eminent lineages of mixed ancestry in northwestern China, including the founders of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Chen advanced a hypothesis that the non-Chinese background of the Tang House was the “key” to understanding its style of rule. However, Chen saw a waning of outside influence

as the ruling class assimilated to Confucian norms in the eighth century. Long after Chen's death, most historians continue to view the Sui and Tang as transitional between the culturally mixed Northern Dynasties and the more orthodox Song Dynasty (960–1279). Though Chen made a valuable contribution by calling attention to the impact of dynasts of Inner Asian origin on North China, his focus on the backgrounds of high-ranking civil officials in the capitals overlooks the continued existence of a pluralistic society in North China interacting with Inner Asia.

This work makes a new attempt to reconcile the competing integrationist and institutionalist outlooks on the Sui and Tang. While not denying the historical significance of the Northern Dynasties and caravan routes as avenues of foreign influence—this book explores how Sui-Tang imperial institutions incorporated Turko-Mongol peoples in the ecologically and ethnographically diverse northern tier of the empires. Sui-Tang rulers valued Inner Asians as subjects because of their ability to supply livestock and render military service. Turko-Mongols in turn were willing to live under Sui-Tang suzerainty in the China-Inner Asia borderlands because the terms of incorporation were politically, culturally, and economically acceptable. Turko-Mongol elites who became long-term inhabitants of the Sui-Tang empires selectively adopted aspects of the high culture of capitals, but had a strong incentive to cultivate bicultural identities and martial skills that were the sources of their power as military leaders. In turn, Sui-Tang emperors and government officials also made efforts to accommodate their Turko-Mongol subjects. The ecological and cultural diversity of the empires was an important contributor to Sui-Tang cosmopolitanism.

### C. Identity and Power: Patrimonialism

A major impediment to understanding the roles of Turko-Mongols in the Sui-Tang empires has been conventional approaches to sociopolitical history. Early efforts to study Sui-Tang society, such as Chen's, concentrated on eminent lineages, sometimes referred to as great clans or an aristocracy, with a particular focus on their putative dominance of government. More recently, anthropological concepts of ethnicity have been applied to the study of Sui-Tang society. Neither type of analysis has been helpful in understanding the prominent political role of Turko-Mongols in the Sui-Tang realms. This book proposes that Weberian and post-Weberian sociological concepts of patrimonialism provide a more effective analytic lens to perceive common patterns of integration and revolt of Turko-Mongols serving Sui-Tang and Inner Asian empires.

Earlier studies of Sui-Tang social history, which took domestic eminent lineages as the main focus of study, effectively ignored the role of Turko-Mongols and other peoples in the empires. This approach—originating in the early twentieth century with the Japanese scholar, Naitō Torajirō, and prominently championed by Chen Yinke—borrowed categories of analysis from medieval Chinese textual sources. As



a result, the modern scholars saw the medieval period as politically dominated by a small number of elite lineages (Chen 2001; Miyakawa 1955). Several prominent works of western scholarship have promoted the general outline of Naitō and Chen's views, only disagreeing on the timing of the downfall of the eminent families (Ebrey 1978; Hartwell 1982; Johnson 1976; Twitchett 1973). Although historians of the Sui and early Tang have been slow to challenge the idea of a "medieval Chinese aristocracy," revisionist scholars of the Northern and Southern Dynasties and late Tang have made highly effective critiques over the past two decades. They argue that claiming eminent status was a social convention, not a guarantee of immediate access to power or intergenerational sociopolitical dominance. False assertions of descent from illustrious ancestors were common.<sup>13</sup> Most germane to this study, Tanigawa Michio (1985, 120–2) has noted that during the Northern Dynasties the Sārbi (Xianbei) elite monopolized dynastic and military power at the expense of so-called Han "aristocrats" in the bureaucracy. Thus, assertions of elite status should be viewed as a strategy of "symbolic violence" in competition for power.<sup>14</sup> This book is not the place to scrutinize the putative rise and fall of the Sui-Tang eminent lineages, but it exposes the flaws of this approach for understanding contemporary social status and political power. As chapter 3 demonstrates, non-members of great families, including Turko-Mongols and Han Chinese commoners, could gain privileged status through military service and other types of governmental duties.

A more recent effort to understand the role of foreigners and indigenous minorities in Sui-Tang China involves the anthropological concept of ethnicity, which commonly is accepted to be a relational social identity that arises when different cultural groups come into contact (Barth 1969; Crossley et al. 2006, 1–17; Keyes 1981). Abramson (2008) has made the most prominent attempt to analyze Tang attitudes toward ethnicity. Though providing an excellent overview of the elite's positive and negative discourses on foreign "barbarians," he fails to clarify non-Chinese ethnic self-identity or explain their rise to social prominence despite frequently being targets of negative stereotyping (Skaff 2008/2009). Other historians of middle and Late Imperial China have debated the applicability of the concept of ethnicity to the premodern period. This book takes the position that elites in the Tang Empire recognized ethnic differences, but that ethnic identity played a subordinate role in political bonding.<sup>15</sup>

A more promising approach to understanding Sui-Tang and medieval Eurasian social, political, and diplomatic history is Max Weber's (1864–1920) concept of patrimonialism. According to Weber (1968, 956–65, 1006–38), patrimonial governance originates as the extension of the authority of the patriarchal household to a larger realm, and has four aspects especially relevant to medieval Eastern Eurasian sociopolitical relations: 1) Subjects render *personal* allegiance to the ruler. 2) Symbolically, the patrimonial domain is treated as the possession of the ruler, and subordinates accordingly are regarded as members of the ruler's *household* with the right to be *fed* at the lord's table. 3) In return for some form of regular income,

subjects render military or administrative service to the master. 4) Rulers typically give ad hoc rewards to adherents who have provided outstanding service. They in turn render “honorary gifts” to the master. Weber (1968, 1006–8) contrasts patrimonialism with modern bureaucratic authority that is characterized in part by an established hierarchy of offices, administrative regulations, record-keeping, and monetized salaries for officials. Weber (1968, 226–66, 1047–51) recognized that pure patrimonialism has never existed. He places premodern imperial Chinese government in the category of patrimonial-bureaucracy, meaning bureaucracy with strong patrimonial characteristics.

Post-Weberian social scientists have elaborated on other aspects of patrimonialism relevant to the Sui-Tang society and Eurasian diplomacy. Norbert Elias has noted that sociopolitical hierarchies in which elites compete for status and power characterize patrimonial or partly patrimonial societies. Rivalry for social prestige and political authority normally entailed attention to ceremony and etiquette, as well as lavish displays of wealth, including gifts and feasts (Elias 1983, 41–116).<sup>16</sup> The ruler should be the only object of loyalty in the ideal patrimonial realm, but another typical aspect of patrimonial and patrimonial-bureaucratic rule is the prevalence of personalistic vertical patron-client relationships and horizontal alliances that permeate all levels of the governmental hierarchy (Eisenstadt 1973, 35; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980, 64–6). The role of patronage in bolstering political power has received copious attention from historians of the Roman Empire (Badian 1984; Wallace-Hadrill 1989) and European colonialism (Newbury 2003), and political scientists of modern developing countries (Kaufman 1972; Theobald 1982), including China (Dittmer 1995; Nathan and Tsai 1995; Pye 1995). There is broad agreement that patron-client relationships have a significant impact on political patterns.

Applying Weberian and post-Weberian sociological models to the empires of China and Mongolia is somewhat controversial. Some historians have argued convincingly that the Mongol Empire was organized along patrimonial lines (Hsiao 1978, 38; Allsen 1986, 516), and others have used patrimonialism to further understanding of imperial Chinese court politics (Eisenberg 1998, 2008; Michael G. Chang 2007). Gan (2003, 291–311) and Chittick (2010) have noted the significance of patron-client ties during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period as the means of maintaining political authority and the *cause* of upheaval when the patron died and clients dispersed. Nonetheless, there have been critiques of specific elements of Weberian and post-Weberian analysis of Chinese society,<sup>17</sup> and some resistance to categorizing Turko-Mongol states as patrimonial.<sup>18</sup> Some criticism is reasonable—Weber had imperfect knowledge of Eurasian society and history because he wrote while Western scholarship on the East was at a nascent stage—but at best calls attention to the need to refine the patrimonial model rather than invalidate it. The broad outline of Weber’s concept remains useful to the study of medieval Eurasia because, unlike most contemporary social science, he took a broadly

comparative and historical approach that drew attention to shared aspects of the human experience, and distinctive characteristics of modern *and* premodern social organization. This book follows scholars who have argued that patrimonialism, and the cognate phenomena of symbolic status competition and patron-client ties, are valuable conceptual tools for understanding Chinese and Turko-Mongol politics. Moving beyond previous scholarship, future chapters will demonstrate that the post-Weberian patrimonial model can be applied profitably to analyze interstate relations in medieval Eurasia.

The patron-client concept is particularly valuable for providing insights into medieval political loyalties and identities. The empires of China and the Mongolian Plateau were multiethnic agglomerations of people. Pastoral nomads living in areas outside of direct legal-administrative control—most people in Turko-Mongol polities and those on the periphery of the Sui-Tang empires—primarily were brought into political formations via reciprocal allegiances between people at higher and lower levels in the hierarchy. The ruler stood at the apex of the political system, representing the ultimate object of loyalty. As chapters 3 and 6 argue, the terminology of political identifications varied, but generically can be conceived of as a patron-client relationship with reciprocal obligations. Allegiances were *personal* and thus *political* identities were too. While it is well known that Turko-Mongol clients identified themselves as followers of their monarch, called a *qaghan* in medieval times (Sneath 2007, 167–9), future chapters will demonstrate that a Sui-Tang “Heavenly Qaghan” also could be the object of allegiance and identification. The situation was analogous to medieval Europe where “everything from the ‘mentality’ of the medieval individual, through the activities of the so-called ‘state’ seems to have been shaped by personal bonds” (Althoff 2004, 2, 105).

Kinship identity was an adjunct to some patrimonial patron-client relationships. Although Weber’s reference to the household as the prototype for the patrimonial realm alludes to the importance of kinship in political relations, he does not elaborate on this phenomenon. Kinship ideology frequently is cited as playing a significant role in Turko-Mongol political organization (Lindner 1982, 698–701; Khazanov 1994, 138–44; Barfield 1993, 149). The functional purpose seems to be akin to medieval Europe where many social and political bonds “imitated the kinship model. The aim was to reproduce the conditions and obligations existing with the family group . . . the ideas and terminology of kinship . . . even had an effect on the bonds between a lord and his men” (Althoff 2004, 62–3, 160). Among scholars of imperial China only a few have stressed the importance of fictive kinship in politics. Gan Huaizhen (2003, 207–58, 291–300) notes that the modern Chinese word for nation or country (*guojia*) literally means state-family. In early imperial times the *guojia* was conceived as a household composed of the emperor, his lineage members, and his officials, especially those closest to the emperor. Moreover, from the late Han Dynasty onward, rulers and officials with close bonds began to form fictive father-son relationships. Howard Wechsler (1985, ix–x) has argued

that Tang legitimacy was based partly on the idea that emperors ruled over a “political family” that included “non-familial elements, especially their own high officials.” Gan and Wechsler provide evidence that medieval Chinese elites imagined their state as a patrimonial household bound together by artificial kinship. However, their focus on civil officials as family members is too narrow. Chapters 3 and 7 demonstrate that the Sui-Tang “political family” encompassed all high-ranking elites, including Turko-Mongol tribal leaders and military officers, and that rulers elsewhere in Eurasia sometimes brought the language of kinship into their political relationships. Like solidarities based on personal relationships, manufactured kinship could be harnessed to create common ground among people who differed in ethnicity, status, and religion.

In addition to identity, patrimonial patron-client bonding is a valuable analytic concept explaining “robust processes” related to the integrative and disintegrative elements of Eastern Eurasian domestic and interstate politics. As Goldstone (1991, 36, 46–7) argues, a frequently overlooked aspect of historical causation is that societies are “fractal” exhibiting “similarity of organization on a variety of scales.” In medieval times hierarchical interpersonal relationships existed at all social levels and extended from the domestic to diplomatic spheres in the Sui-Tang empires and Turko-Mongol khanates. Chapter 3 demonstrates the value of the patron-client model for understanding elite and plebeian political bonding in Eastern Eurasia. Chapters 6 through 8 show that patron-rulers in China and Turkic Mongolia used similar strategies to compete for control over the smaller Turko-Mongol tribes living in the margins between them. The great powers sought the exclusive right to invest outer clients with titles of office or nobility in order to indicate interstate alliances.<sup>19</sup> Marriage, fictive kinship, or trade—signaling a closer relationship—could supplement investiture. Turko-Mongol clients willingly acceded to these arrangements to gain material rewards and elevate their status. In essence, Türk and Sui-Tang rulers shared the ability to rule from the saddle in building their empires.<sup>20</sup> The volatility of patrimonial politics and diplomacy is detailed in chapter 9. Patron-client political bonds were vulnerable to personality clashes or death. The inherent fragility of patrimonial relationships partly explains why the Sui-Tang and Türk empires experienced periodic internal political instability and tribal revolts. Medieval interstate relations often appear to be a whirlwind of alliances and warfare in part because interpersonal allegiances and identities were relatively brittle mortar binding Turko-Mongols to their rulers in Mongolia or China.

#### D. China-Inner Asia Borderlands

The China-Inner Asia borderlands—of modern Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang—were another factor shaping the patterns of interactions and exchanges between Sui-Tang empires and neighboring Turko-Mongols. Over the past two decades, the borderland has emerged as an influential concept among

historians and social scientists. Older ideas about frontiers viewed them as “natural” geographical, political, and cultural dividing lines. When empires expanded, cultural change was believed to diffuse unidirectionally, only occurring when “civilized” peoples engulfed, tamed, and assimilated so-called “barbarians” (Skaff 2004, 117–8). Joseph Fletcher (1986, 40–1) has advanced the most sophisticated version of the thesis that China was relatively isolated from the rest of Eurasia. Fletcher argued that ecological factors explained differences in nomadic-sedentary interactions in East and West Asia. In the western parts of the continent, such as Iran, pastures were in close proximity to settled oases. Consequently, nomads tended to regularly interact with settled farmers. However, he claimed that in East Asia the “lines between nomad and sedentary were most sharply drawn, Mongolia and China confronted one another through much of history as worlds apart.” Many scholars still ascribe to variations of the Fletcher thesis.<sup>21</sup>

A countervailing and increasingly dominant trend in the historiography dates back to the work of the mid-twentieth century explorer and scholar, Owen Lattimore ([1951] 1962, 238–51), who introduced the concept of the “marginal zone” to Chinese history and the wider realm of scholarship. More recently, scholars have revived and expanded on Lattimore’s ideas of frontiers as zones of cultural interaction, including historians of China’s North and Southwest (Andrade 2007; Di Cosmo 1999a; Gaubatz 1996; Giersch 2006; Millward 1998; Shin 2006). Borderland studies have introduced the concept that frontier peoples living on the peripheries of states were active participants in history “who considered their homelands to be the center, not the edge” (Limerick 1987, 26). State institutional and ideological power is weaker on frontiers, giving local elites and common people higher degrees of political freedom, but exposing them to more violent conflict. Borderlands also tend to be regions with higher degrees of ethnic and cultural interaction. As a result, identities and cultures have greater fluidity than in core areas because there are more options for sharing, borrowing, adapting, and innovating (Baud and Van Schendel 1997; Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Scott 2009; Skaff 2004; Cheng 2010). Borderlands and core regions of states can mutually influence each other. This aspect of core-borderland relations most frequently has been applied to the contexts of early modern and modern European colonialism and American expansionism (Gould 2007a, 1416). However, it would be a mistake to assume that the European colonial experience parallels earlier historical patterns because of its shorter duration and greater asymmetries of power between Europeans and indigenous peoples. This book follows Gaubatz (1996, 19–21) in arguing that China and Inner Asia had a “persistent” borderland, which was the site of millennia of interactions between core regions of China and Mongolia. The resulting exchanges were more symmetrical and had a profounder long-term mutual impact than those of the age of European imperialism.

Studies of medieval Chinese frontier history have taken two approaches to frontier issues. Some scholars of Sui-Tang foreign relations ignore geographic considerations,

implicitly assuming that political divisions between the agricultural empires and nomadic states reflected a clear ecological and cultural divide between Chinese and Turko-Mongols (Beckwith 1987; Pan 1997). More recent work on mid-imperial China's northern borderlands demonstrates the existence of interethnic political relationships and shared cultural practices (Skaff 2004; Standen 1999, 2007, 15–25), but fails to define the geographical, ecological and ethnic parameters of China's northern borderlands. Chapter 1 and Appendix C make a preliminary attempt to rectify this shortcoming by using information in Tang geographical texts to map the contemporary China-Inner Asia borderlands. More generally, the importance of the China-Inner Asia borderlands to Eastern Eurasian history is a recurring theme of this book. Control of this frontier region, which harbored farming and pastoral peoples, contributed to changing patterns of political conflict and cultural synergy between China and the rest of Eurasia.

### E. Environment

The historical climate and environment were factors that affected the borderlands and relations between the China and Inner Asia, reconfirming that there is “a close link between environmental and frontier history” (Perdue 2005, 17). Climatic theories have garnered attention—and criticism—mainly as potential explanations for pastoral nomadic attacks on China. In the early twentieth century, a number of scholars posited that long-term aridity triggered human migrations in Eurasia, including invasions of China. Their environmental determinism fell out of favor with historians due to lack of corroborating evidence (Perdue 2005, 16; Teggart 1939, 233–5). Recently, Chinese climatic scientists who study long-term trends in temperature and rainfall have hypothesized that pastoral nomadic conquests of China occurred during cold and arid periods, but these studies suffer from a weak grasp of the historical background.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, this book will argue that long-term climatic and population trends encouraged incorporation of Turko-Mongols into the northern tier of the Sui-Tang empires. Chapter 1 presents scientific and historical evidence that grasslands of the medieval China-Inner Asia borderlands were more plentiful than at present, providing an environment favorable to incorporating pastoral nomads as a significant constituency of the empires. Significantly, some historians who see a clear division between China and Inner Asia, such as Fletcher, draw their evidence from the late imperial period, when Inner Mongolian pastoralism appears to have been on the decline.

Short-term weather aberrations also shaped events by increasing the volatility of bonds between Turko-Mongol clients and their rulers. Scholars of Inner Asia have long recognized that weather disasters threatened pastoral nomadic subsistence economy and political organization. Episodic droughts and severe winters are known to increase livestock mortality, which in turn can have a severe impact on herding populations (Begzsuren et al. 2004; Khazanov 1994, 72–3). When lack of



rain or heavy snow deprived animals of forage, tribes had a strong incentive to migrate in search of new pasture. If the disaster led to significant herd die-offs, they sought new rulers who could provide material aid or war leadership to restore livelihoods. The most extreme crises could cause massive warfare and wholesale political reorganization on the steppe (Di Cosmo 2002a, 179–81). Past research, though valuable, mainly has focused on the impact of weather disasters on internal pastoral nomadic politics. This book will demonstrate that harsh weather also could disrupt relations between the Sui-Tang empires and Turko-Mongols living in the China-Inner Asia borderlands.

In sum, environmental factors gave rise to two different types of “robust processes” affecting relations between the Sui-Tang empires and neighboring Turko-Mongols. Long-term climatic trends favored incorporation of pastoral nomads into the Sui-Tang empires and thus promoted cosmopolitanism. Short-term bursts of severe weather periodically threatened the pastoral nomadic economy and political attachments to Sui, Tang and Turko-Mongol monarchs. Thus, the relatively favorable medieval climate was an integrative factor, while extreme weather intruded periodically as a disruptive element.

## F. Warfare

Borderlands also played a role in influencing the changing Eastern Eurasian balance of power, which in turn affected patterns of diplomatic negotiations detailed in later chapters. Medieval diplomatic agreements—over terms such as investiture, marriage, and trade—were consciously calibrated and recalibrated to reflect the prevailing strength of various parties in a multilateral geopolitical arena. Military aggression served not only as a means of obtaining territory or plunder, but also as a negotiating tactic to gain a more favorable agreement in diplomatic agreements. Unfortunately, current scholarship only provides a piecemeal understanding of the contemporary power relations during the period from 580 to 800. Some episodes are well understood, such as Tang imperial expansion in the seventh century or the dynasty’s dependence on the Uighur after the An Lushan rebellion of 755. However, we lack a synthetic account that takes a long-term and multilateral perspective to analyze the capabilities of various Eastern Eurasian states to project force.<sup>23</sup> Chapter 1 and Appendix A take a step toward improving knowledge of power relations by investigating the patterns of attacks on North China from 599 to 755, and give particular attention to relations between the Sui-Tang empires and the Turkic khanates of Mongolia. Cognizance of the swings in the balance of power will enhance understanding of the negotiations described in chapters 6 to 8.

Aside from describing shifts in the China-Mongolia power balance, this book proposes a hypothesis that control of the intervening borderlands was a factor in determining the ability of both sides to project force. Earlier scholarship offered an Inner Asian-centered thesis to military power that emphasized the superiority of

Turko-Mongol cavalry over infantry of agricultural societies. Turko-Mongol conquests reached limits when internal political organization lacked strong leadership or externally expanding armies arrived at regions without adequate pasture for cavalry mounts (Fletcher 1979–80, 237–9; Lindner 1982, 1981; Sinor 1972, 1981; Smith 1978). More recently, Di Cosmo (2002b) points out that the outcome of nomadic-sedentary military conflict involved greater numbers of variables. For example, in the case of Tang conquest of the Türks in 630, the Türk army became vulnerable due to a combination of internal dissent and severe winter weather (Graff 2002b). This book builds on these recent insights to argue that control over the China-Inner Asia borderlands was another significant factor determining the outcome of warfare between the Sui-Tang dynasties and Turkic khanates. When Türk rulers controlled Inner Mongolia, it was a launching pad for their heavy raiding of Tang China. On the other hand, when Inner Mongolia and other borderlands were incorporated into the Sui-Tang empires, Turko-Mongol khanates became defensive. Not only were strategic passes to invade China blocked, but borderland pasture provided Sui-Tang dynasts with the ecological environment needed to create effective cavalry armies for expansion. Retaining the China-Inner Asia borderlands and loyalties of the Turko-Mongol inhabitants therein became keys to determining the Eastern Eurasian balance of power.



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PART ONE

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HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL  
BACKGROUND

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# Eastern Eurasian Geography, History, and Warfare

Eight centuries prior to the timeframe covered in this book, the Yellow River valley of North China and the Mongolian Plateau became sites of competing imperial polities. China's first phase of imperial unity occurred during the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (202 BCE–220 CE) dynasties. Meanwhile, the Xiongnu (209 BCE–155 CE) established a competing imperial tradition in Mongolia with mainly Turko-Mongol subjects. At their cores, the two regions appeared antithetical. The Yellow River Valley contained fertile farmland that supported tens of millions of farmers. In Mongolia abundant grassland sustained perhaps a million nomads and tens of millions of heads of livestock. Their histories became entangled in the China-Inner Asia borderlands where the peripheries of both regions merged, substantial numbers of farmers and Turko-Mongols lived, and the two imperial centers competed. This historical pattern continued in the medieval period as the Sui-Tang empires vied with six successive Turkic dynasties in Mongolia—First Türk, Sir-Yantuo (628–46), First Uighur (646–ca. 690), Second Türk, Basmil (742–44), and Second Uighur (744–840)—which had differing degrees of cohesiveness and expansiveness. The Sui, Tang, both Türk empires, and the Second Uighur can be considered great powers—defined as states that sustained expansive empires for more than two decades. The other great Eurasian powers detailed in this book are the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty, Byzantine Empire, Sasanian Dynasty, and Islamic Umayyad Caliphate (the latter supplanted the Sasanians in West Asia).

This chapter provides an introduction to medieval Eastern Eurasian geography, political organization, and military struggles. The first part introduces the Eastern Eurasian climate and geography, and makes an original contribution to historical research by mapping the medieval China-Inner Asia borderlands. The next two sections provide background information for the non-specialist on the Sui- to mid-Tang dynasties and contemporary Turko-Mongols of Eastern Eurasia. The final part

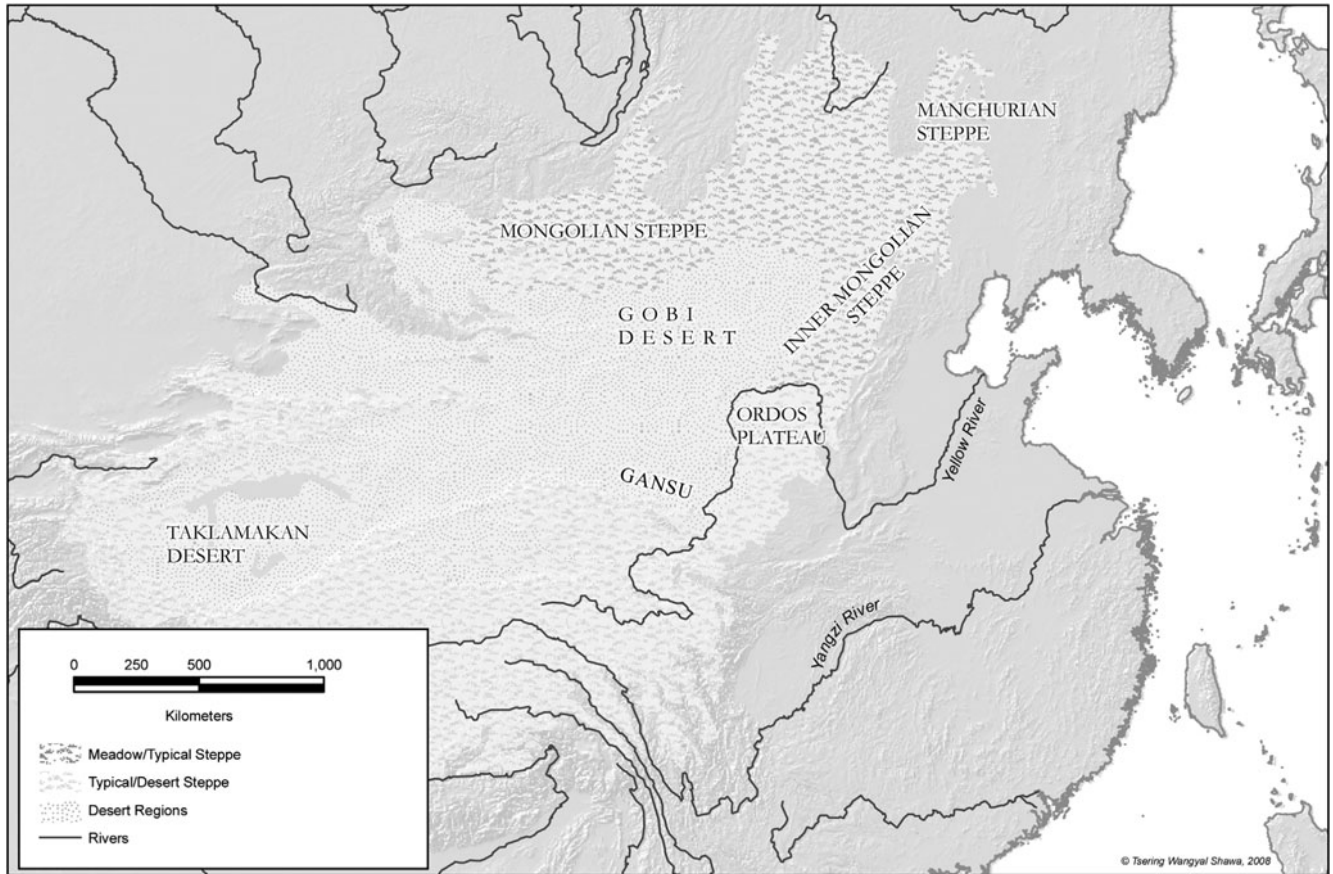
makes another original contribution by describing the changing balance of power in Eastern Eurasia. Six major swings in China-Mongolia power relations occurred from 600 to 755. This chapter advances the dual hypotheses that the China-Inner Asia borderlands were more extensive than at present and had pivotal geostrategic value.

## I. Ecology of Eastern Eurasia

### A. Historical Perspectives on Climatic and Ecological Change

The ecology of Eastern Eurasia is chiefly determined by variables related to soil type, altitude, precipitation, and temperature. Precipitation mainly arrives with monsoon winds that carry moisture northward from the Indian Ocean and South China Sea from May through July. Rainfall tends to be heaviest in southern and eastern regions of China and decreases in the north and west. In the winter months, lesser amounts of precipitation arrive on westerly winds. Temperature determines the actual retention of moisture in the soil, length of growing season, and biological productivity. Cooler regions—at more northerly latitudes and higher altitudes—experience less evaporation, which can compensate for a lack of rainfall (An et al. 2000). As a result of the interrelationship of these factors, the Chinese heartland tends to have sufficient precipitation, approximately between 500 and 1100 millimeters (20–44 inches), to support forests or settled agriculture. Moving northward and westward in Eastern Eurasia, the environment becomes progressively more arid as rainfall decreases. Inner Mongolia, receiving in the range of 250 to 500 millimeters (10–20 inches) of annual precipitation, supports seasonal grasslands, pockets of agriculture, and forests at higher altitudes. Further north is the gravelly Gobi, the world's third largest non-polar desert, with anywhere from 50 to 250 millimeters (2–10 inches) of annual precipitation. However, the trend toward aridity is reversed on the Mongolian plateau, despite only 200 millimeters of annual precipitation, because evaporation decreases at higher altitudes and latitudes. Consequently, Mongolia supports mountain forests and rich steppe at 1500 meters above sea level (Christian 1998, 4–8; Krader 1955, 301–19; Taaffe 1990, 21, 34–6; Yang et al. 2004; Yang et al. 2005; Yu et al. 2004).

These geographical and climatic patterns of modern Eastern Eurasia create a ring of steppe and desert steppe, with the Gobi as a relatively barren doughnut hole in the center (Map 1.1). The Mongolian plateau has the richest grasslands. The modern North China grasslands—approximately corresponding to the China-Inner Asia borderlands of the Tang—generally decline in biological productivity along an east-west gradient due to gradually decreasing soil quality and precipitation. As soil moisture and fertility diminish from Manchuria in the northeast to Xinjiang in the northwest, there is a progressive transition from meadow and typical steppe to desert steppe intermixed with sandy or rocky desert. This trend is partly reversed in areas with higher elevations. The meadow steppe of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia



Map 1.1. Eastern Eurasian Steppe and Desert

can be over fifteen times as productive as the desert steppe of Xinjiang (Committee 1992, 43; Taaffe 1990, 34; Yang et al. 2005; Yu et al. 2004). In Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, pastoral nomadic herds can reach over fifty heads per square kilometer, while in Xinjiang herd density can be as low as three per square kilometer (Krader 1955, 319). These ecological factors are important to consider because they directly influenced Turko-Mongol population densities and political power.

The modern ecological conditions described above do not necessarily correspond exactly to those of earlier eras. Since the late imperial period, the trend has been toward disappearance of forest and decreasing productivity of pastures. Large game animals have experienced localized extinctions due to climatic change, habitat loss, and over-hunting (Elvin 2004; Vermeer 1998, 259–60). True pastoral nomadism is being replaced with settled pastoralism and dry land agriculture (Vermeer 1998; Brogaard 2003; Humphrey and Sneath 1999, 218–77).<sup>1</sup> Remaining grasslands probably are not as rich as in earlier times. Likely causes of pasture degradation are trends toward climatic desiccation and population growth over the previous three millennia.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Eurasian climate has become cooler and drier. The past five hundred years are notable for the lowest precipitation levels in China's history (Elvin 2004, 5–7; Yang et al. 2002; Yancheva et al. 2007, 2007b; Zhang and Lu 2007; Zhang et al. 2008). Medieval climatic conditions generally were wetter with the summer monsoon rains probably reaching farther north than at present. Moreover, the last half millennium has been a phase in Chinese and world history involving unprecedented population growth, partly fueled by modernization and the spread of New World crops, which provide high yields on land previously considered non-arable. Between 200 BCE and 1400 CE the peaks in Chinese population fluctuated between about fifty and seventy million people. The Tang population reached a maximum of over fifty million. By 1800 the population probably surpassed four hundred million and today it stands at 1.3 billion (Liang 1980; Vermeer 1998, 266–72).

Taking into consideration the contrast between present and past climatic and demographic conditions, we can suppose that the China-Inner Asian borderlands have changed over time. The borderlands of medieval times would have had much less cultivated land and desert. A relatively lightly populated North China receiving more precipitation would have had more and richer grasslands and forests in the vicinity of agricultural lands—providing space for a confluence of hunting, gathering, pastoral, and farming lifestyles.

## B. Charting the Tang-Inner Asia Borderlands

Validating a hypothesis about farmers and pastoralists being in close proximity on mid-imperial China's northern frontier requires scientific, archaeological, and historical study. Scientific inquiries on historical climate and ecology are relatively numerous, but have not reached a high level of refinement.<sup>3</sup> Archaeological research

is most crucial to determine the temporal and spatial distribution of pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, and agriculture. However, studies of provincial settlement patterns have been scarce because Chinese archaeology has focused its limited resources on recovery efforts and study of more spectacular excavations such as elite tombs. One rare example of survey archaeology in south-central Inner Mongolia found tantalizing evidence for the coexistence of Chinese-style agricultural villages on plains and settled agro-pastoralists in hills during the Han Dynasty, but unfortunately this study does not investigate later periods (Indrisano 2006, 176–82). Historians using textual sources have given more attention than archaeologists to research on hunting and animal husbandry. Their studies have provided evidence that medieval North China supported more animals that relied on forests and grasslands than today. Deer were the most common large game animals in North and South China. Elites and commoners alike hunted deer and ate venison (Schafer and Wallacker 1957–58; Schafer 1977, 99–100). The sheep superseded the pig as the most important domesticated animal in North China during this period. Cattle and horses also were relatively abundant (Wang 2001; Elvin 2004, 276–89). In contrast to later periods, the diet of the northern elite during the Tang included lamb, veal, and dairy products from the milk of sheep, goats, cows, and horses (Schafer 1977, 99–108).<sup>4</sup> In addition to a lower population and more favorable climate, political and cultural factors appear to have contributed to these developments. An influx of pastoral nomads and agro-pastoralists to North China during the Northern Dynasties brought large domesticated animals and a taste for milk and meat products (Wang 2001, 34–41). While this historical research contributes to our knowledge of North China's subsistence economy, it is chronologically and geographically vague. Obviously more scientific, archaeological, and historical research is needed to determine the shifting spatial parameters of the China-Inner Asia borderlands in the Sui, Tang, and other periods.

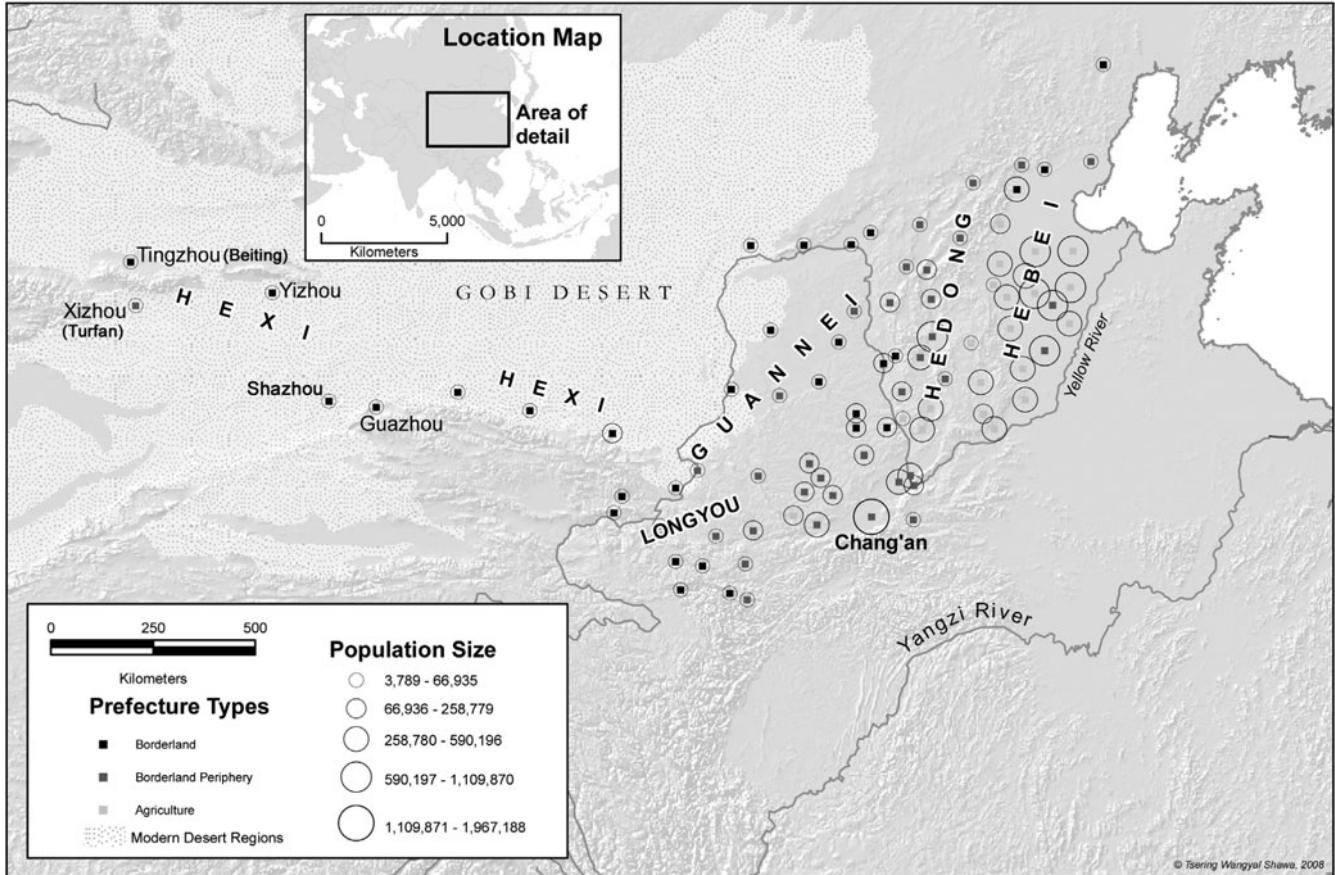
This chapter takes a step forward with a survey of extant Tang geographical texts, seeking to roughly demarcate the contemporary China-Inner Asia borderlands in the Tang circuits (*dao*) situated along the northern tier of the empire—Hexi, Longyou, Guannei, Hedong, and Hebei. Appendix C discusses the geographical sources and compiles data on each prefecture, including population figures, local tribute goods, inhabitants, and other information related to pastoralism and hunting. Some of the most valuable information comes from records of locally produced tribute products that prefectures sent to the throne. Each prefecture is categorized as borderland, borderland periphery, or agricultural according to a consistent set of criteria detailed in Appendix C.<sup>5</sup> Prefectures classified as China-Inner Asia “borderland” either had settled populations in close proximity to grasslands and/or had ethnicities known to practice pastoralism or agro-pastoralism. The “borderland periphery” lacks indications of regular direct contact between farmers and pastoralists, but has signs of agro-pastoralism or customs associated with Inner Asia, such as horseback riding and big game hunting. “Agricultural” prefectures demonstrate



typical characteristics of the “Chinese” subsistence economy that mainly relies on intensive crop production and weaving with relatively little animal protein.

The results of the survey are depicted on Map 1.2. The sizes of the circles correspond to the populations of the prefectures in the mid-eighth century. Not surprisingly, many smaller prefectures located in semi-arid or arid regions in the north and northwest of the empire—Hexi, western Longyou, central to northern Guannei, and northern Hebei—meet the definition of China-Inner Asia borderland, where agriculture depended on irrigation, and pastoralists or agro-pastoralist peoples lived in the vicinity. The borderland periphery runs mainly in an arc from eastern Longyou, through southern Guannei into central and northern Hedong. In this region there is no direct mention of Turko-Mongols or other ethnicities, so it is likely that agro-pastoralism or trade was the source of pastoral products. Open pastures and forests probably were relatively abundant compared to later times because big game hunting and animal husbandry were practiced. Lying to the east of the arc of borderland periphery is the mainly agricultural region of the North China plain. Hebei was the breadbasket of the empire in the first half of the Tang, so it is not surprising to see it dominated by intensive agriculture with the exception of borderland and borderland periphery in the north. The survey does not preclude the possibility that animal husbandry existed in agricultural prefectures—two prefectures in the Hebei agricultural heartland are classified as borderland periphery and during the Northern Dynasties large flocks of sheep existed as far south as Shandong (Wang 2001, 39)—but apparently livestock rearing was a declining sector of the economy in parts of North China by the eighth century. The changing distribution of farm animals demonstrates how borderlands could shift in response to alterations in conditions, but further study, especially by archaeologists, is needed to fully understand the chronology and dynamics of the particular ebb and flow.

Two crucial points can be drawn from the geographical survey. The first is that the ecology of the borderlands has changed. Most of central and southern Guannei and Hedong meet the definition of borderland or borderland periphery, indicating the prevalence of pastoralism and settled stockbreeding, which apparently had disappeared by the late imperial period. According to Bray’s geographical classification of modern Chinese agricultural regions, these areas should belong to the winter wheat and millet zone, lacking significant animal husbandry (1984, 11–2). Striking changes also have occurred in Hexi (Gansu Corridor) and northern Guannei (Ordos Plateau). During the Sui and Tang empires, these regions contained rangelands supporting pastoral nomadic tribes. Today, 40 percent of Gansu’s former grasslands have suffered serious degradation, even though yields from irrigated oasis agriculture remain high (Committee 1992, 21) The Ordos Plateau—a key region where pastoralism and irrigated agriculture intersected during the Han and Tang dynasties—now is classified as mainly semi-desert or desert. The southern margin of the desert on the Ordos Plateau has shifted approximately 300 kilometers south from 41 to 38 degrees of latitude (Yang et al. 2004; Vermeer



Map 1.2. China-Inner Asia Borderlands, Eighth Century

1998, 237–8; Zhao and Xing 1984, 247).<sup>6</sup> An example of a Tang farming community abandoned beneath mobile sand dunes is Xiazhou in central Guannei, now located in the Mu Us Desert, on the Shaanxi-Inner Mongolia border outside the Ming Great Wall. Xiazhou's prefectural seat, Shuofang, and surrounding towns, had a settled population that relied on irrigated agriculture from a local river and its tributaries. In the early seventh century the population was around 10,000, and with the expansion of irrigation, the population grew to 53,000 in 742 (Appendix C; JTS 221a:6216; Hou 1985, 249–51; Wang 1987, 18–20). One governmental horse pasture was located on the outskirts with at least 185,000 horses around 680 (Chapter 9, n. 4). Today, sheep and goats are the main domesticated animals because they are better adapted to the arid environment and sparse forage (Wang et al. 2005). The steppe land around Xiazhou also supported a significant population of pastoral nomads. At some time in the first half of the Tang Empire, there was a count of 3,422 households, with a total population of 14,320 nomadic people who would have herded horses, sheep, and other animals (see chapter 8, Table 8.1). Overall, this information paints a picture of a wetter and more productive environment than at present.

The second important point is the proximity of China-Inner Asia borderland regions to the major political and population centers of the Sui-Tang realms. The main Sui-Tang capital of Chang'an (modern Xi'an) was in southern Guannei, a region mainly categorized as borderland periphery. The true borderlands began only 250 to 500 kilometers to the north and west of the capital in Guannei, Longyou, and Hexi. The propinquity of Chang'an to the China-Inner Asia frontier zone hints at the potential influence of the borderland culture on the center of power, which will be investigated in future chapters. From the vantage point of imperial Chinese demographic trends, it also is evident that a greater proportion of the Tang population lived in proximity to the China-Inner Asia borderlands than in later times. Table 1.1 tabulates census figures from North China during the Han, Sui, Tang, and Northern Song dynasties. Appendix B provides a full enumeration of the data. There are controversies about the reliability of premodern census data, but in terms of the proportions of households or population in the north, the trend is unmistakable.<sup>7</sup> During the first millennium, more than a third of the population lived in the northern region that was contiguous to the China-Inner Asia borderlands. At the beginning of the second millennium, during the Northern Song Dynasty, less than a fifth of the population lived in proximity to the northern frontier zone. The absolute population of the north decreased about 6.4 percent from the Han to Tang dynasties, perhaps due to climatic factors or less efficient census enumeration, but remained fairly stable from the Tang to Song dynasties. Meanwhile, demographic growth accelerated in the Middle and Lower Yangzi regions and the southeast.

Well-known economic and political factors can explain these trends in population distribution. Southern land increasingly was cleared for cultivation and new varieties of rice were introduced that improved yields (Hartwell 1982, 383–94).

Table 1.1. North China Population Trends

Census	Total Households	Households in North	Households in North (%)	Total Population	Population in North	Population in North (%)
Han 2 CE	12,356,470	4,837,815	39.15%	57,671,401	20,457,059	35.47%
Sui 609	9,070,414	3,690,306	40.69%			
Tang 742	8,973,634	3,058,622	34.08%	50,975,543	19,145,316	37.56%
N. Song 1080	16,569,874	3,164,101	19.10%			

Meanwhile, the Song Empire lost control of most former Tang-Inner Asia borderland prefectures, which fell under the control of dynasties with indigenous borderland rulers, the Xi Xia and Liao. The demographic and economic centers of gravity in Eastern Eurasia were shifting southward, decreasing the influence of the China-Inner Asia *ecological* borderland on the Northern Song heartland. The *ecological* borderlands became central lands of the Xi Xia and Liao polities. Thus, we should not be surprised that Inner Asia had a greater impact on the Sui and Tang (and Xi Xia and Liao) empires than on the Northern Song.

## II. Sui-Tang Empires

The Sui and Tang dynasties had origins in the China-Inner Asia borderlands. Their rise can be traced back to the several centuries of political division in China and Mongolia after the fall of the Han and Xiongnu empires. A significant new development during the period of disunity was the advent of Sārbi (Xianbei) rule in North China. After originating in Manchuria and establishing smaller states in the China-Inner Asia borderlands, one Sārbi lineage, the Tabgach (Tuoba), established the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534). When civil war brought an end to the Northern Wei, North China eventually was divided between the Sārbi-ruled dynasties of the successive Eastern Wei/Northern Qi in the east and Western Wei/Northern Zhou in the west (Golden 1992, 131–2). Shortly after the Northern Zhou reunified North China in 577, the Sui Dynasty unexpectedly emerged in 581 when Yang Jian, formerly a close confidant of the Northern Zhou emperor Wudi, usurped the throne from a child emperor. The new emperor, known posthumously as Wendi (r. 581–605), conquered southern China in 589 to reunite all of the Chinese heartland for the first time in several centuries. Wendi's work rapidly unraveled under his heir, Yangdi (r. 605–17), whose repeated failed attempts to conquer Koguryō to the northeast sparked rebellions. One of the rebel leaders, a former Sui frontier military commander named Li Yuan, gained control of the capital, Chang'an, in 617 and

declared his own Tang Dynasty in 618. Li Yuan, who like all Tang emperors is best known by his posthumous temple name of Gaozu (r. 618–26), gradually consolidated power over the next several years in a series of battles against Sui loyalists and regional warlords. Thereafter, the Tang House was to remain in control of China for almost three centuries (Wechsler 1979a; Wright 1978).

The first century of Tang rule was marked by turbulent court politics and imperial expansion into Inner Asia. In 626 Gaozu's second son and able general, Li Shimin, assassinated the crown prince, his older brother, and forced his father to abdicate. Best known as Taizong (r. 626–49), the new emperor began to promote aggressive policies of expansion into Inner Asia. Taizong's son and successor, Gaozong (r. 649–83), successfully continued his father's external campaigns. When Gaozong suffered a debilitating stroke in 675, his wife, Empress Wu, took greater control over government. After his death she usurped authority from her own sons—Zhongzong (r. 684, 705–10) and Ruizong (r. 684–90, 710–2)—who only ruled nominally in the 680s. In 690 she took the unprecedented and never-repeated step of formally establishing herself as female emperor of the Zhou Dynasty (690–705). After a coup ended the empress's reign in 705, the Tang Dynasty was restored. Zhongzong and Ruizong were reinstated for relatively short periods. Xuanzong (r. 712–56), who also staged a coup to grab power, presided over the height of the Tang's economic prosperity and political power. Under his rule the population surpassed fifty million. At the peak of imperial expansion 490,000 garrison troops guarded the frontiers.

Imperial unity began to crumble in 755 when the northeastern frontier commander, An Lushan (d. 757), staged a rebellion. Though An soon died, the revolt lasted until 763 and nearly brought down the dynasty. Xuanzong's son, Suzong (r. 756–62), usurped power and struggled throughout his reign to end the civil war. Suzong's son, Daizong (r. 762–79), finally ended the revolt, but could not exert centralized power over many provinces, especially in the northeast. Daizong and his son, Dezong (r. 779–805), presided over an empire territorially restricted to the Chinese heartland, and implemented a defensive foreign policy (Peterson 1979).

The Sui and Tang empires based the central government in the primary capital of Chang'an and sometimes the court and parts of the administration migrated to the secondary capital in Luoyang (Xiong 2000, 1993).<sup>8</sup> The Sui-Tang empires inherited bureaucratic and legal institutions that had matured from the Eastern Zhou period through the Han Dynasty and then underwent further transformation under the Northern Dynasties. The emperor appointed grand councilors who oversaw a central bureaucratic system that was divided into Six Ministries, Nine Courts and Five Directorates with various administrative functions, and the Chancellery and Secretariat, which advised the emperor and handled imperial paperwork (Hucker 1985, 6–37). Some of these agencies played major roles in frontier and foreign affairs. The Ministry of Rites and Court of State Ceremonial, mentioned in chapter 5, shared duties related to hosting diplomatic envoys. As will be discussed in chapter 8, the



Ministry of War had authority over frontier armies that incorporated Turko-Mongols, and the Court of the Imperial Stud administered the state horse breeding system. Despite a tendency to view the government as a rationally functioning system, chapter 3 will argue that it resembles a patrimonial-bureaucracy riven with the politics of personal relations.

### III. Turko-Mongol Economy and Sociopolitical Organization

The Sui-Tang empires and neighboring Turko-Mongol peoples were continuously enmeshed in a web of friendly and hostile contacts. In this book, “Turko-Mongol” refers to pastoral nomads who spoke Turkic or Mongolic languages, which are related families of the Altaic language phylum (Golden 1992, 16–28). Two caveats are in order for this designation. First, Turkic and Mongolic languages dominated the steppe of contemporary Eastern Eurasia, but are not the only tongues that pastoral nomads have spoken. For example, one pastoral nomadic group that played a role in relations with the Tang, the Tangut, may have had a Tibeto-Burmese language (Golden 1992, 167). Second, although pastoral nomadism was the typical Turko-Mongol way of life at the time, Türks and Mongols often have practiced farming, especially later in history. For the sake of simplicity, in this book the designation Turko-Mongol will refer to pastoral nomads of Eastern Eurasia, including the Tangut.

Pastoral nomadism is a sophisticated and specialized economy that allows humans to survive and prosper by exploiting the resources of arid and semi-arid Eurasian steppe. Turko-Mongol pastoral nomads use pastures to sustain flocks—normally consisting of a combination of five grazing animals: sheep, goats, cattle, camels and horses—whose products supply them with food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and fuel. Nomads migrate with their livestock along fixed seasonal, round-trip routes timed to provide the animals continuously with fresh supplies of grass. The basic political and socioeconomic unit is the camp, which travels together. The size varies depending on the density of pasture and season, but five or six households are typical in Mongolia. The camp often is bound together by blood and marital ties, but unrelated families sometimes join (Barfield 1993, 136–46; Khazanov 1994, 15–138).

While pastoral nomads still live in the modern world, they no longer possess the political and military power that they had prior to the twentieth century. The nature of the Turko-Mongol subsistence economy influenced the larger-scale sociopolitical organization and state-building of premodern times. Pastoral nomadic camps had to be mobile and dispersed to prevent livestock from overgrazing, but their peripatetic lifestyle made them more difficult to coordinate and control. Camps normally were drawn together into larger political groupings, usually referred to as “tribes,” a designation that must be treated critically.<sup>9</sup> This book follows medieval

Turkic sources that conceptualize sociopolitical hierarchy as clans (*bod*) and clan-tribes (*oghush*) at the lower level, which formed a tribal union (*bodun*) with one ruler. A military-administrative organization (*el*), termed khanate in this book, formed a state ruling over one or more *bodun*. From at least the early fifth century, the supreme ruler of a khanate was called *qaghan* (Giraud 1960, 68–70; Golden 2006, 33–42; Klyashtorny 2004, 22–3; Luo 2009, 1–26). Contemporary Tang observers defined *qaghan* as equivalent to the Chinese title of “August Emperor” (*huangdi*) (BS 98:3251; TD 194:5301; Luo 2009, 1). Turkic tribes, tribal unions and khanates had aristocratic lineages that often monopolized rule, such as the Ashina of the Türks and Yaghlakar of the Uighur.

As future chapters explore the nature of Turko-Mongol leadership and politics, the flexibility of social and political bonding will become apparent. Tribes, tribal unions, and khanates were extremely dynamic entities that could undergo temporary or permanent changes in name or composition as they competed to establish dominance or assert independence. Larger political groupings of nomads invariably included people of heterogeneous origin who sometimes differed in spoken languages or dialects (Lindner 1982; Morgan 1986, 37). When tribal leaders built their khanates, ruling over assorted tribes and tribal unions, the collected people identified themselves politically with the leadership. For example, Türk became the designation for all subjects of the Türk empires. Nonetheless, subordinate tribes and tribal unions retained their original names, identities, and social structures. The inner tribes, generally composed of the *qaghan*’s tribal following predating formation of the khanate, retained indigenous leaders who became officials of the military-administrative hierarchy. The *qaghan* used diplomacy and warfare to force outer tribes into the khanate, and often imposed new leaders who were members of the ruling clan. Inner tribes normally were the most trusted and received the greatest rewards. Outer tribes had fewer rights, were expected to remit tribute, and generally were more willing to change allegiances (Golden 2006, 35–6; Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 336–7). Their tribute was redistributed, apparently with the inner tribes as the primary beneficiaries (Ecsedy 1977, 8). Leaders of the subject inner and outer tribes and tribal unions held a variety of titles, such as *yabghu*, *eltäbär*, *irkin*, and *shad*. The supreme *qaghan*’s highest ranking subordinates, most often close relatives of the ruler, also might hold the title of *qaghan* (Chavannes [1900] 1969, 164, n. 3; Drompp 1991; Golden 2006, 51–7). To further complicate the picture, portions of the same tribe or tribal union might render allegiance to different rulers, while still maintaining their shared identities.<sup>10</sup>

Sui-Tang Chinese sources describe groupings of nomadic peoples in terms that only roughly correspond to the Turkic hierarchy: clan/surname (*xing*), tribal division (*bu*), tribe (*buluo*), polity/state (*guo*) and race (*zhong*). However, Chinese usage often is confused, providing vague or decontextualized references to sociopolitical units.<sup>11</sup> I have used my best judgment to determine whether a Turko-Mongol group in Chinese sources is a clan, tribe, or tribal union, but precision is impossible.

Due to the ambiguity of Chinese primary sources, the terms “nomadic group” and “tribal group” also will be used as general references. A related problem is Chinese terminology for tribal leadership. Although Sui-Tang sources often accurately transliterate Turkic titles of tribal leaders, such as the Chinese *kehan* to represent the Turkic *qaghan*, another common usage is a generic term, *shouling*, literally “head and neck,” to refer to heads of clans, tribes, or even tribal unions or khanates. This book will use the term “chief”—appropriately derived from a Latin word for “head”—to refer to indigenous leaders of unknown titles who led clans, tribes, or tribal unions.

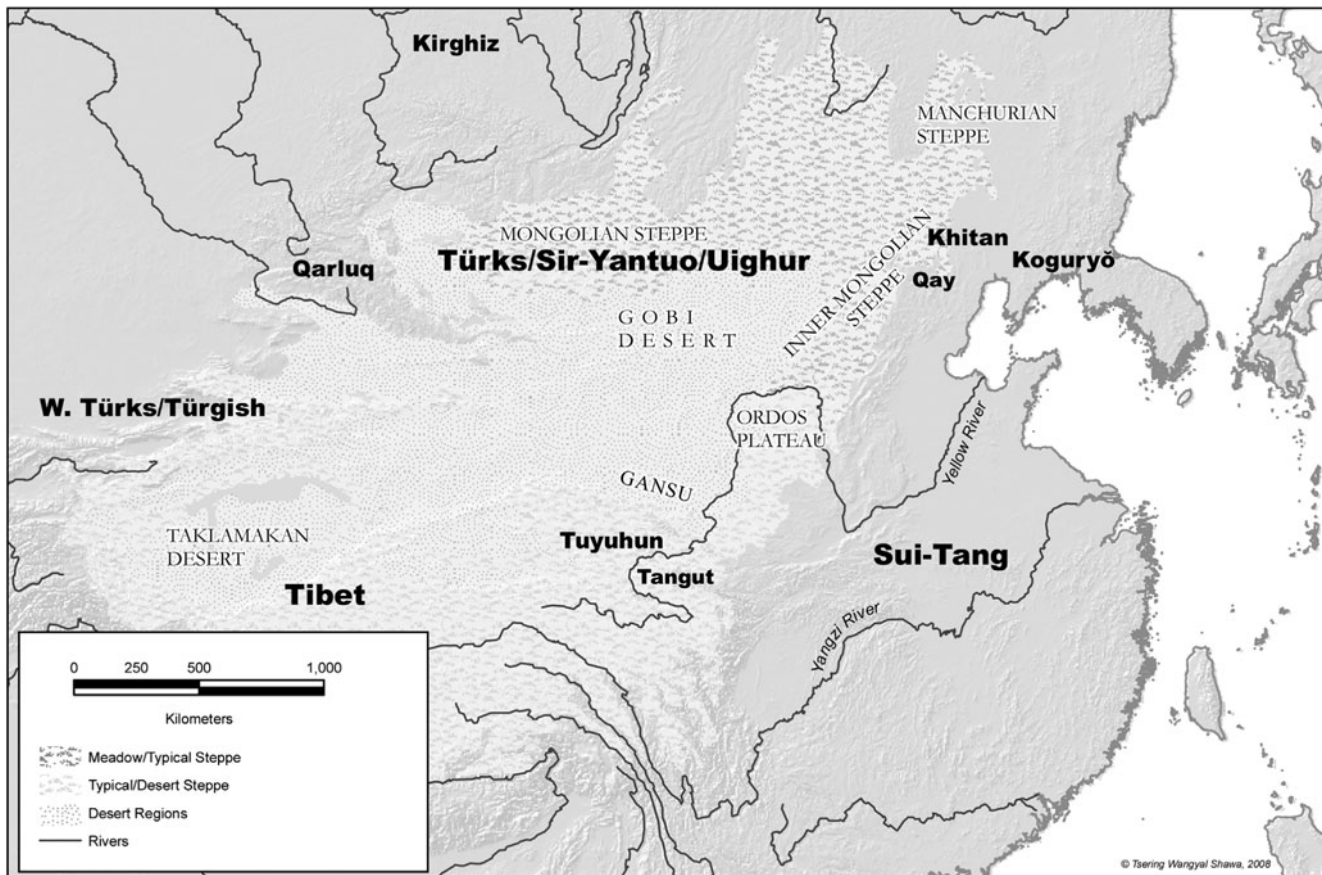
Warfare is a final critical aspect of Turko-Mongol society relevant to this book. As with sociopolitical organization, the nature of the pastoral nomadic environment and subsistence economy shaped their modes of fighting. During the medieval period, when a light cavalry of mounted archers was the preeminent rapid-strike military technology, Turko-Mongol nomads were expert practitioners of archery and horse riding. Tribesmen had no lack of mounts and riding experience. They could raise horses cheaply on the abundant grass of the steppe and learned to ride from an early age. Furthermore, men had plenty of time to practice the military arts because women and children could handle herding and milking. As men supplemented the family diet by hunting, they continuously honed skills at riding, archery, and teamwork that could be applied directly to cavalry warfare (Allsen 2006, 209–28; Smith 1978, 60–1). All able-bodied males were expected to fight on horseback. The ability to attack and retreat rapidly allowed nomads to supplement their pastoral income with proceeds from predation and extortion (Lindner 1982, 4). Stronger tribal groups raided weaker ones or settled villages. Despite the relatively low populations of the Turkic khanates of Mongolia, the excellence of their cavalry made them major players in the multilateral struggles for power in Eastern Eurasia.

### A. Geographical Distribution of Pastoral Nomads in Eastern Eurasia

Since the rise of the Xiongnu, Mongolia had been the main center of Turko-Mongol power in Eastern Eurasia. Sizeable populations of Turkic and Mongolic pastoral nomads also lived in the grasslands of the China-Inner Asia borderlands. In the steppe regions outside of Mongolia, Turko-Mongol polities sometimes ruled independently, but more often fell under the suzerainty of great powers in China, Mongolia, Tibet, or West Asia. The geographical distribution of the major khanates and tribal unions will be described below.

The First Türk Empire, centered on the Mongolian Plateau, expanded northward to the forests of Siberia, eastward to Manchuria, southward to Inner Mongolia and westward to the Caspian Sea, forming the largest pastoral nomadic empire to this point in history. Imperial unity proved to be fleeting, however, because succession disputes in 582 caused the Western Türks to sever allegiance to their kin to the east (Sinor 1990; Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996; Xue 1992, 86–370). The First Türk





Map 1.3. Medieval Eastern Eurasia

Empire fragmented further in the late 620s, as a formerly subordinate Tiele tribal union in Mongolia revolted and established a new khanate under the leadership of the Sir-Yantuo. The Tang finished off the remaining Türks in Inner Mongolia in 630 and began to rule over them while the Sir-Yantuo remained in control of Mongolia (Duan 1988). Two decades later another Tiele tribe, the Uighur, overthrew the Sir-Yantuo with Tang military assistance and established a relatively weak khanate (Cheng 1994, 51–61). The next change in power occurred when the Türks in Inner Mongolia revolted against the Tang in 682, reconquered the Mongolian Plateau, and established the Second Türk Empire (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 335–6; Xue 1992, 431–584). The Uighur and some other tribes of their tribal union, now known as the Toghuz-Oghuz, sought refuge on the Tang frontier.<sup>12</sup> Later, as the Second Türk Empire disintegrated in internecine succession strife, the Basmil briefly established a khanate in 742. The Uighur soon overthrew the Basmil, but had to fight for another decade to exert full authority over Mongolia. The Uighur Empire, which endured for a century became the most politically stable and long-lasting of the medieval Turkic khanates (Kamalov 2003; Mackerras 1990). The Uighur Empire fell in 840 when the Kirghiz invaded from the north. Despite being Turkic, the Kirghiz probably chose to remain in their territory of the Yenisei River basin in southern Siberia because they were adapted to its mixed agricultural and pastoral economy. Mongolia declined as an imperial center until Genghis Khan reunited Mongolia in 1206 (Drompp 1999).

Insight into the population size and troop strength of Mongolian Plateau khanates can be gleaned from scattered figures in Tang and Arabic sources. The Sir-Yantuo had 200,000 quality warriors when they ruled Mongolia in the mid-seventh century (JTS 195:5195, 199b:5344). Under the Second Türk Empire the number of troops swelled to 400,000 in the early eighth century, but this figure probably includes the Western Türk tribes under Türk domination at the time (JTS 194a:5172; ZZTJ 206:6535, 6543).<sup>13</sup> A Muslim envoy reported in the late eighth or early ninth century that the Uighur qaghan had 233,000 troops, roughly in line with the earlier Sir-Yantuo total (Minorsky 1948, 284). Extrapolating from these figures, we can estimate that the Mongolian Plateau could support approximately two-hundred thousand to two-hundred-fifty thousand troops and eight hundred thousand to one million people.<sup>14</sup> Although the population of the medieval Mongolian Plateau was approximately one-fiftieth of Sui-Tang China, Turkic rulers were competitive in battle because they could mobilize the entire adult male populace to create large armies of quality cavalry. The two Türk khanates and the Second Uighur Khanate can be classified as great powers.

To the west, two major Turkic khanates successively ruled over the On Oq “Ten Arrows” tribal union and lucrative Silk Roads oases of Inner Asia. The most powerful was the previously mentioned Western Türk Empire. However, from 640 onward the Tang gradually encroached on Türk-ruled oases on the periphery of the Taklimakan Desert until a campaign in 659 brought an end to Western Türk power. The ensuing

several decades of Tang and Tibetan domination and internal disunity ended when the Türgish tribe rose from among the On Oq to form a new khanate (ca. 699–ca. 760). The Türgish had 200,000 troops at the height of their power in the 720s during the reign of the qaghan, Sulu (r. 716–738) (JTS 194b:5191; XTS 215b:6067; ZZTJ 211:6714; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 44). Under pressure from the Tang Empire in the east and Muslim Umayyad Caliphate in the west, the Türgish only temporarily asserted suzerainty over the agricultural and commercial center of Sogdia and never reached a pinnacle of power approaching the earlier Western Türk Khanate (chapter 6). The Western Türks and Türgish sometimes rose to the level of great powers capable of building empires, but always proved to be strategically vulnerable because of their inability to defend oasis states against empires based in China, Mongolia, Tibet, or West Asia (Skaff 2002). For this reason the Western Türk and Türgish khanates will be classified as intermediate borderland powers.

Closer to Sui-Tang territory in Koko-nor (modern Qinghai), the Tuyuhun (Tibetan: Togon) were the dominant tribal union. Speakers of a Mongolic language, they mainly practiced pastoral nomadism, but farmers lived among them. Their khanates were relatively weak and successively fell under the suzerainty of the Sui, Tang, and Tibet in the seventh century (Beckwith 1987; Molè 1970). The Tangut (Dangxiang) were a prominent tribal union living under Tuyuhun authority and the only contemporary Eastern Eurasian pastoral nomads who spoke a Tibeto-Burmese language. Due to the rising power of Tibet, factions of the Tuyuhun and Tangut migrated eastward to live under Tang suzerainty. Descendants of the Tangut are most famous for founding the Xi Xia Dynasty (1038–1227) in northwestern China (Dunnell 1994). The number of warriors under Tuyuhun and Tangut control in the seventh and eighth centuries is unknown, but they appear to have been intermediate borderland powers.

In Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia, the Khitan (Qidan) and Qay (Turkic: Tatabi, Chinese: Xi) played important roles in the struggles between Türk and Sui-Tang empires. The Khitan and Qay were contiguous Mongolic-speaking tribal unions that periodically united or feuded with each other, the Sui, Tang, Türks, and Uighur. The Khitan mainly were pastoral nomads, but the Qay had elements of the population practicing pastoral nomadism, millet farming, and hunting and gathering. Compared with the Turkic tribes, they tended to be more geographically stable, but less politically united because of unwillingness to accept the dominance of a single aristocratic lineage. The number of troops at their disposal was relatively small, with the Qay having over 30,000 good soldiers and the Khitan 43,000 (JTS 199b:5354, 5349–50; XTS 219:6167, 6173; Golden 1992, 143–5; Holmgren 1986b). Even combined, this was less than half the number that Mongolia-based Turkic khanates could command. Positioned strategically on grasslands between the Mongolian Plateau and northeastern China, in the first half of the eighth century the Qay and Khitan became the objects of a diplomatic and military struggle between the Türk and Sui-Tang empires. Like the Tangut, the Khitan are most famous for later founding a dynasty, Liao (916–1125), which was partly inspired by Chinese models. Also like

the Tuyuhun and Tangut, the Qay and Khitan can be classified as intermediate borderland powers that did not build empires in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Finally, substantial numbers of pastoral nomads lived in Inner Mongolia and the Hexi corridor, usually falling under the suzerainty of other powers based in China, Mongolia or Tibet. Under Tang rule, 30,000 households of Türks were living in western Inner Mongolia in 641. Their population totaled over 100,000 people, including 40,000 troops and 90,000 horses (JTS 194a:5164; XTS 215a:6040). The number of cavalry soldiers that this region could supply was perhaps only a fifth of Mongolia. Nonetheless, these and other pastoral nomads played important roles in the Sui-Tang empires.

## IV. Eastern Eurasian Balance of Power

The balance of power in medieval Eastern Eurasia is only roughly understood, so the discussion below is meant to advance knowledge of the subject. An important contribution to this effort is Appendix A, which tabulates individual attacks on North Chinese prefectures recorded in Sima Guang's annalistic history, *Comprehensive mirror for the aid of government* (ZZTJ). Military strikes are proxy evidence providing a rough barometer to the balance of power between the Sui-Tang empires and their various rivals in Inner Asia. As discussed in the appendix, data was collected for each year from 599 to 755, when the Sui-Tang bureaucracies consistently seem to have recorded major incursions that later became known to Sima Guang. The vast majority were raids (Chinese: *kou*, *qin*, or *lüe*), which can be defined as rapid strikes and retreats with light cavalry for the purpose of plunder (Standen 2005, 163–4). Relatively few invaders sought to capture territory or force the Sui or Tang to pay indemnities. The summaries of the incursions in Tables 1.2 and 1.3 indicate that the Türk empires posed the greatest threat, but other prominent attackers included the Tuyuhun and Tibetans. The discussion below will provide context for the data.

### A. Imperial Jousting

The First Türk Empire faced its first major challenge in Eastern Eurasia when the Northern Zhou conquered the Northern Qi in 577 to reunify North China. The challenge subsequently grew when the Sui Wendi usurped power from a Northern Zhou child emperor in 581 and conquered South China in 589. A pivotal event occurred a decade later, when the Türk leader, Qimin Qaghan (r. 599, 603–609), fled southward from Mongolia to render fealty to the Sui. With a secure base in Inner Mongolia and Sui aid, Qimin Qaghan and his heir, Shibi Qaghan (r. 609–19), eventually dominated Mongolia (Pan 1997, 100–28). The Sui benefitted from the arrangement because, as Appendix A demonstrates, the north-central frontier of Guannei and Hedong remained peaceful from 603 to 613.

Table 1.2. **Spatial and Chronological Analysis of Attacks on North China Prefectures, 599–755 (Bold type indicates each period's major attacking party, and the number and percent of attacks)**

Regional origin of attack party	Identity of attack party	Late Sui (599–617)		Gaozu (618–26)		Taizong (627–49)		Gaozong (650–83)		Empress Wu & sons (684–711)		Xuanzong (712–55)		Totals (599–755)	
		No. of attack parties	Percent- age	No. of attack parties	Percent- age	No. of attack parties	Percent- age	No. of attack parties	Percentage	No. of attack parties	Percent- age	No. of attack parties	Percent- age	No. of attack parties	Per- centage
Mongolia/ Inner Mongolia	<b>Türks</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>67.4%</b>	4	28.6%	<b>11</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>59.5%</b>	5	16.7%	<b>113</b>	<b>51.6%</b>
	Sir-Yantuo					2	14.3%							2	0.9%
	Uighur/ Tiele	1	7.7%					1	3.2%					2	0.9%
	Jihu	1	7.7%	3	3.4%									4	1.8%
Manchuria	Khitan	1	7.7%	1	1.1%			1	3.2%	8	19.0%	3	10.0%	14	6.4%
	Qay			2	2.2%			1	3.2%	2	4.8%	1	3.3%	6	2.7%
Koko-nor	<b>Tuyuhun</b>			17	19.1%	<b>5</b>	<b>35.7%</b>							22	10.1%
	Tangut			5	5.6%	1	7.1%							6	2.7%
Koko-nor / Tarim Basin	<b>Tibet</b>							10	32.3%	2	4.8%	<b>14</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	26	11.9%

Western steppe	W. Türks	2	15.4%		2	14.3%	4	12.9%	1	2.4%		9	4.1%	
	Türgish								4	9.5%	5	16.7%	9	4.1%
Various	Other		1	1.1%			3	9.7%			2	6.7%	6	2.7%
Total attack parties in period		13	89		14		31		42		30		219	
Total attacks in period (Can be fewer than total attack parties because some attacks involved multiple parties.)		13	84		14		26		42		26		205	
Total Years of Reign(s)		19	9		23		34		28		44		157	
Total attacks/year		0.68	9.33		0.61		0.76		1.50		0.59		1.31	
							0.19	Gaozong Attacks/ Yr. 650–75						
							2.63	Gaozong Attacks/ Yr. 676–83						

Sui-Türk hostilities recommenced in 615 when Sui Yangdi made a botched attempt to dethrone Shibi Qaghan, who retaliated by raiding the Sui Empire. Türk power waxed as Sui power waned during the civil war of the Sui-Tang transition. Shibi and his brother Chuluo Qaghan directly ruled eighty thousand Chinese (*Zhongguo ren*) and supported a puppet Sui court by 620. Chuluo died under mysterious circumstances as he planned to conquer North China. A third brother succeeded to reign as Illig Qaghan. He rejected Chuluo's invasion strategy. Instead, from an Inner Mongolian base, he decided to take advantage of the chaotic civil war in China to implement the most intensive raiding in the history of the medieval Turkic khanates (JTS 56:2280, 194a:5154–6; XTS 87:3730–1, 215a:6029). As Table 1.3 indicates, during Illig's reign from 621 to 630, an astounding sixty-two raids occurred (6.2/year) while the Tang struggled to consolidate power internally. This was almost a third of all attacks in the period from 599 to 755. The attacks were so widespread that many may have involved local raiders, working without Illig Qaghan's authorization or support, who took advantage of weak frontier defenses.<sup>15</sup>

A rapid reversal of the power balance commenced after Tang Taizong usurped power from his father, Gaozu, in 626. The new emperor negotiated a truce with Illig. Over the next few years, Taizong consolidated power while Illig faced growing internal dissension. Taking advantage of Illig's weakening political position and the strategic vulnerability of his capital in Inner Mongolia, Taizong mobilized forces that conquered the Türks in 630 (Graff 2002b; Pan 1997, 176–9). After much debate at court, recounted in chapter 2, Taizong decided to incorporate the Türks of Inner Mongolia into the Tang Empire. Aided by cavalry of Türks and other tribes, for the next forty years Taizong and his son Gaozong embarked on a series of successful campaigns in Inner Asia. Taizong's major conquests were the Tuyuhun in Koko-nor (635), Sir-Yantuo in Mongolia (646), and the Tarim Basin oasis-states to the northwest by 648 (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). Several unsuccessful attempts to capture Koguryō in the 640s were the only notable military failures of his reign. Although Gaozong frequently is considered a weak ruler because his wife, Empress Wu, dominated the court in his later years, he was extremely successful in external affairs until suffering a second stroke in 675. Under his watch, the Tang Dynasty reached its seventh-century pinnacle of hegemonic power with the conquests of the Western Türk Khanate in 659 and Koguryō Kingdom in 668. The Tang Empire aggressively expanded territorially and gained unprecedented mastery over Turko-Mongols of Mongolia and the China-Inner Asia borderlands. As Table 1.2 indicates, the Tang northern frontiers were relatively calm. Under Taizong's rule, North China suffered from less than one attack annually (0.61/year). Tang borders were even safer under Gaozong from 650 to 675 with an average of less than one attack every five years (0.19/year).

After reaching a zenith of foreign aggression in 668, the Tang Empire underwent a period of retrenchment that lasted through the early eighth century. Territorial expansion of the mid-seventh century probably overextended resources, which left



Table 1.3. Attacks on North China by Rulers of Mongolia and/or Inner Mongolia, 599–755 (Major attackers in bold type)

<i>Ruler</i>	<i>Khanate</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Total Attacks</i>	<i>Attacks/Year</i>
<i>Various</i>	Türk	599–602	6	1.25
Qimin Qaghan	Türk	603–09	0	0.00
Shibi Qaghan	Türk	610–19	5	0.50
Chuluo Qaghan	Türk	619–20	2	1.00
<b>Illig Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>621–30</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>6.20</b>
Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan	Sir-Yantuo	628–45	2	0.11
<i>Various</i>	Sir-Yantuo	645–6	0	0.00
Tumidu	Uighur	646–48	0	0.00
Porun	Uighur	649–60	0	0.00
Bisudu	Uighur	661–79	1	0.05
<i>Various</i>	Türk	679–81	4	1.33
<b>Ilterish Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>682–93</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Qapaghan Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>694–715</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0.91</b>
Bilgä Qaghan	Türk	716–34	3	0.16
Tängri Qaghan	Türk	735–41	0	0.00
<i>Various</i>	Basmil/Uighur	742–46	0	0.00
Gele Qaghan	Uighur	747–55	0	0.00
<b>Totals</b>			<b>117</b>	<b>0.74</b>

the government vulnerable. The first sign of weakness was Tibet's seizure of suzerainty over the Tuyuhun in Koko-nor and conquest of the oasis states in the Tarim Basin in 670 (Beckwith 1987, 27–36; Pan 1997, 239–47; Wang 1992, 68–88). The crisis deepened with Gaozong's major stroke in 675, which led to Empress Wu's domination of government for the next thirty years. She was a brilliant and devious political tactician, but as a woman trying to rule a traditionally patriarchal empire, her foremost priority was to consolidate power internally. Her only major military success was retaking the Tarim Basin oases in 692, which Tibet made little or no effort to defend (Beckwith 1987, 52–4). She suffered from bad luck when a series of weather disasters from 679 to 682 sparked a Türk revolt and restricted her ability to supply punitive campaigns. When Türk rebels established a second khanate in 682 and retook control of Mongolia by 690, she was unable to mobilize an effective



response (JTS 194a:5166–7; XTS 215a:6043–5; Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 335–6). During the period of rule by Empress Wu and her sons from 684 to 711, external attacks reached the most intense level since the early years of the Tang (1.5/year, see Table 1.2), with the Türks striking the most blows. As Table 1.3 indicates, Ilterish Qaghan carried out thirteen separate attacks from a base in Inner Mongolia at the start of the Second Türk Empire (1.00/year). After founding her Zhou Dynasty in 690, the empress's primary nemesis was Ilterish's brother, Qapaghan Qaghan. Table 1.3 demonstrates that he launched twenty raids from Mongolia between 694 and 715 (0.91/year), including the most destructive attacks since the early years of the Tang. Qapaghan's downfall came when he overextended his military while trying to duplicate the western conquests of the First Türk Empire. Although he initially subjugated the western steppe by 711, two years later he suffered a defeat in Sogdia at the hands of the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate, a new imperial power expanding into Inner Asia (Dobrovits 2005). Meanwhile, as will be described below, the Tang had taken advantage of Qapaghan's extended absence on his western campaigns to improve frontier defenses in Inner Mongolia. The defeats in the west and lack of plunder from China led to unrest among subordinate tribes. A warrior of a rebellious tribe assassinated Qapaghan around 715 (JTS 194a:5172).

After Ilterish's sons Kül Tegin (685–733) and Bilgä Qaghan (684–734, r. 716–34) worked together to reunite the Second Türk Empire, a standoff ensued with the Tang. Emperor Xuanzong and Bilgä only sparred once in 720 when a failed Tang campaign against the Mongolian Plateau led to a successful Türk raid on northwestern China (ZZTJ 212:6742–3; CFYG 986:17a–19a; TZLJB 33:1498). Bilgä Qaghan directed most of his energies to attacking rebellious outer tribes (Table 1.4). After an impasse in diplomatic negotiations beginning in 720, Bilgä Qaghan and Xuanzong finally struck an agreement to trade horses for silk in 727. Meanwhile, from 726 Tibet became the Tang's primary threat and the Türgish Khanate the secondary one. Xuanzong successfully solved the problem of Türgish raiding with punitive campaigns in the late 730s (ZZTJ 214:6813, 6833; 6838). Tibet was neutralized in the late 740s after the Tang's capture of strategic mountain passes blocked invasion routes (Beckwith 1987, 127–34). Although Xuanzong was not an outstanding conqueror, Table 1.2 demonstrates that he limited attacks on the northern frontier (0.59/year) as effectively as his great-grandfather, Taizong (0.61/year).

The An Lushan rebellion of late 755 caused another monumental fluctuation in the Eastern Eurasian balance of power. The revolt, which originated in the Tang garrisons of northern Hebei, effectively removed the northeastern provinces from central control for the remainder of the dynasty (Peterson 1979). When loyal garrison troops were pulled out of the Tang northwest to suppress the rebellion, Tibet occupied all of the Tarim Basin oases, the Hexi corridor and northern Guannei. The Tang was sustained by an uneasy alliance with the Uighur Empire. In the short term, Uighur cavalry helped the Tang thwart the rebels. In the long term the Tang was a lesser empire, bereft of large swaths of the China-Inner Asia borderlands and

*Table 1.4. Türk Attacks and Tang-Türk Relations, 701–735 (Gray shading indicates years without attacks)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Target of Türk Attack</i>	<i>Related Events</i>	<i>References</i>
701	Tang (Longyou, including raid on Tangut)		Appendix A, Table A.1; Tekin 1968, 275
702	Tang (6 prefectures in Guannei and Hedong)		Appendix A, Table A.1; Tekin 1968, 268, 275
703		Empress Wu accepts Qapaghan Qaghan's proposal to arrange marriage	Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
704	Basmil İduq-qut	Basmil neglect to pay tribute to Türks	Tekin 1968, 275–6
705		Zhongzong takes power	
706	Tang (General Chacha?)	Zhongzong cancels marriage agreement of 703	Tekin 1968, 268, 276; Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
707	Tang (3 Guannei prefectures)		Appendix A, Table A.1
708			
709	Türgish	Tang constructs Yellow River outer defenses	JTS 93:2982; XTS 111:4152
710	Az & Chik	Ruizong takes power	Tekin 1968, 276
711	Kirghiz, Türgish	Ruizong accepts Qapaghan Qaghan's proposal to arrange marriage	Tekin 1968, 269, 276; Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
712		Xuanzong takes power	

(continued)

Table 1.4. (continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Target of Türk Attack</i>	<i>Related Events</i>	<i>References</i>
713		Xuanzong cancels marriage agreement of 711	Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
714	Tang: Hexi	Failed marriage negotiations	Appendix A, Table A.1; Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7; Tekin 1968, 276
715	Qarluq		Tekin 1968, 269, 276
716	Az	Qapaghan Qaghan assassinated; Bilgä Qaghan takes power	Tekin 1968, 270
717	Izgil & Toghuz-Oghuz	Five battles occur	Tekin 1968, 270, 276–7
718	Qarluq, Qay (Tatabi), Toghuz-Oghuz	Xuanzong and Bilgä Qaghan begin marriage negotiations	Tekin 1968, 271, 278; Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
719			
720	Tang (3 Hexi prefectures)	Failed Tang-Khitan-Basmil campaign against Türks leads to breakdown of Tang NW frontier defenses; Türks allied w/ Tibet?	Appendix A, Table A.1; Beckwith 1987, 92
721		Xuanzong rejects Bilgä Qaghan's marriage proposal, but agrees to father-son relationship	JTS 194a:5175; XTS 215b:6053; ZZTJ 212:6744
722	Khitan		Tekin 1968, 279
723	Qay (Tatabi)		Tekin 1968, 279

724		Winter famine in Mongolia; Toghuz-Oghuz attack Bilgä Qaghan's camp; Xuanzong rejects Bilgä Qaghan's marriage proposal	Tekin 1968, 277; Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
725		Türks send envoys to Xuanzong's Feng and Shan ritual	Chapter 5
726		Xuanzong rejects Bilgä Qaghan's marriage proposal	Chapter 7, Table 7.2, n. 7
727		Tang-Türk horse trade established	Chapter 8
728–32			
733		Tang-Qay army attacks Khitan-Türk army	JTS 103:3190, 199b:5352–3; XTS 219:6170–2; ZZTJ 209:6801–2; Tekin 1968, 279
734			
735	Khitan, Qay	Khitan attack Türks; Internal power struggles create instability in Khitan foreign relations	QJJ 11:5a–b, 13:9a–10a; QTW 286:10a, 288:15b–16b; Herbert 1978, 84–6

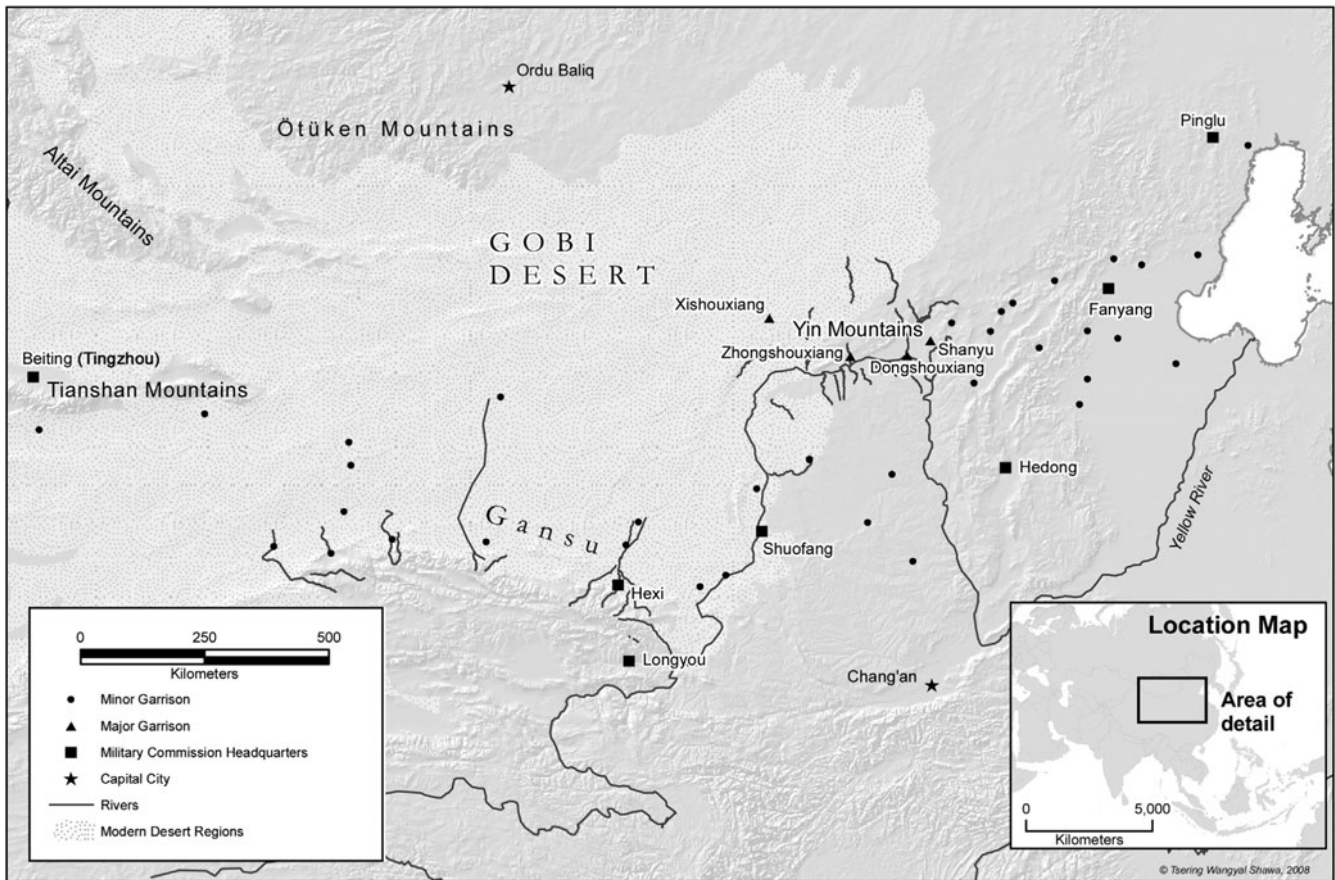
unable to revive the expansionist foreign policy that was a hallmark of the early dynasty. The Tang continued to depend on the Uighur alliance to counter Tibet and supply horses in exchange for silk. This tripartite balance of power remained in effect until the 840s when the Tibetan and Uighur empires collapsed almost simultaneously (Beckwith 1987, 143–72; Mackerras 1990; Twitchett 2000).

## B. Frontier Defenses

The Türks comprised more than half of all attack parties striking North China from 599 to 755 (113 of 219). Nonetheless, the Türk threat was intermittent. The majority of their raids are attributable to three strong rulers—Illig Qaghan (r. 621–30), Ilterish Qaghan (r. 682–93), and Qapaghan Qaghan (r. 694–715). What caused the tremendous fluctuations in the capacities of these China- and Mongolia-based powers to wage war? As mentioned in the Introduction, earlier scholarship emphasized variations in the caliber of Turko-Mongol leadership. While not denying that quality of command played a role, another key factor was control of the China-Inner Asia borderlands. Illig Qaghan, Ilterish Qaghan, and Qapaghan Qaghan were able to carry out this heavy raiding because of the use of Inner Mongolia as the staging grounds for campaigns on China. On the other hand, the Tang's capture of strategic passes and grasslands in North China and Inner Mongolia greatly restricted the attacks of Illig Qaghan after 627 and Qapaghan Qaghan after 709, and created the possibility for Tang aggression in Inner Asia.

Illig Qaghan's prodigious assault of North China in the 620s was facilitated by alliances with borderland warlords who controlled northern Guannei and Hedong during the Sui-Tang civil war. Tang officers recognized the strategic importance of the frontier region. For example, a Tang general noted that the Türk-allied warlord, Yuan Junzhang, used his territory in northern Hedong to aid Türk raiding parties: "When the Türks come south to attack, they use Mayi [Shuozhou] as a resting place" (JTS 69:2523; XTS 94:3835; ZZTJ 190:5968; Wu 1998, 149–55). When Tang captured northern Hedong from Yuan Junzhang in 627 and Guannei from another warlord in 628, the Türks lost staging grounds for raids (Wu 1998, 165–6). Illig Qaghan's final attack on the Tang Empire in 629 was in the northwest (Hexi) because the wealthier regions of Guannei and Hedong had been cut off. The Inner Mongolian borderlands became Tang territory after the conquest of the Türks in 630. Tang and Türk troops subsequently coordinated defenses until the Türk revolt in 679 (Xue 1992, 371–429). This was a period of great security in North China.

Toward the end of Gaozong's reign and during Empress Wu's time in power, the Second Türk Empire successfully raided North China because of weak defenses and poor strategy. One of the empress's main strategic blunders came when she invited Qapaghan Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire to punish the Khitan in Manchuria, who had previously attacked Hebei. Qapaghan exploited the opportunity to use the Khitan domain as a staging ground for massive raids on Hebei (JTS 194a:5168;



Map 1.4. Tang Garrisons in the Early Eighth Century

XTS 215a:6045; ZZTJ 205: 6503, 6509–6510). Empress Wu's recruitment of Qapaghan Qaghan was a strategic mistake because she deviated from two customary Tang military practices. One, Qapaghan commanded his forces without oversight from the Empress's military officers. Two, a more distant khanate (Türks) attacked a neighboring one (Khitans).<sup>16</sup> Empress Wu's second major blunder was abandoning former defenses. Ceding the Yellow River north of the Ordos Region was the most detrimental decision. This was the perfect way station to water and feed Türk horses that were weakened after the hard crossing of the Gobi Desert from Mongolia (Skaff 2009b, 177).

The remedy in both cases was to reestablish garrisons at strategic locations (Map 1.4). The debacle in Hebei prompted Empress Wu to appoint a new commander, Xue Na, who halted attacks from 698 to 712 by improving frontier defenses north of Fanyang (JTS 93:2984; ZZTJ 210:6659, 6672–3). Even more crucially, Turkic attacks on North China were halted for half a century after Zhongzong reestablished major garrisons north of the Yellow River at Xishouxiang, Zhongshouxiang, and Dongshouxiang in 709. As in the 620s, eighth-century Tang frontier commanders vociferously advocated for this defensive strategy (Skaff 2009b, 177–8). The pattern of subsequent attacks in the early eighth century likewise matched that of the 620s, because in both cases the Türks only were able to raid Hexi in the northwest. After 709 Qapaghan Qaghan and Bilgä Qaghan carried out campaigns primarily against their subordinate pastoral nomadic tribes (Table 1.4). The case of the Türk-Tang conflict demonstrates that firm frontier defenses thwarted the raiding of the powerful qaghans, Illig and Qapaghan. The ensuing dissatisfaction of subordinate tribes probably contributed to the Tang's conquest of Illig in 630 and the assassination of Qapaghan around 715.

## Conclusion

The significance of the medieval China-Inner Asia borderlands has not been fully understood. Interactions between farmers and pastoralists probably were more prevalent in medieval times than the late imperial period because of a more favorable climate and lower settled population. Pastoral nomadic peoples thrived on extensive tracts of pasture. Settled farmers were more likely to practice agro-pastoralism and engage in hunting, reducing their cultural distance from Turko-Mongols. The potential cultural importance of the borderlands was amplified because of their close proximity to the primary Sui-Tang capital of Chang'an.

The China-Inner Asia borderlands and its inhabitants also played an important role in determining the balance of power between China and Mongolia. Turko-Mongol cavalry traveling southward from Mongolia had to pass through the Gobi Desert. After the hard desert passage, warriors needed to water, feed, and rest their horses before continuing to North China. The successful raiding of

the Türk qaghans Illig, Ilderish, and Qapaghan depended on controlling the borderlands. When the Sui and Tang empires defended strategic points effectively, Türk troops lost their staging grounds for attacks. Moreover, control of the frontier zone, and its plentiful horses and skilled mounted archers, improved Sui-Tang offensive capabilities. Whichever side controlled the intermediate zone between China and Mongolia gained a substantial advantage in warfare. Despite the strategic and cultural importance of this China-Inner Asia borderland zone and its inhabitants, their significance to the Sui-Tang empires has been underestimated. The reasons will be explored in the next chapter.



# China-Inner Asian Borderlands: Discourse and Reality

The trends in climate, ecology, demographics, and warfare discussed in the previous chapter establish the potential that the medieval period was a high point of interaction and conflict in the China-Inner Asia borderlands. This chapter will compare Sui-Tang elite perceptions of the borderlands with complexities of interethnic relations in frontier regions. Sui-Tang elites had attitudes toward Turko-Mongols that were more varied than conventionally understood, including positive assessments. Nonetheless, Confucian ideology and record-keeping practices caused premodern historiography to denigrate or overlook Turko-Mongols and other borderland inhabitants living within the empires. The rhetoric of received texts in turn has strongly influenced modern scholarship. In contrast, this chapter provides a more balanced assessment of the Sui-Tang elite, China-Inner Asian borderlands, and the role of Turko-Mongols and other peoples in the China-based empires.

## I. Concepts of “Barbarians”

### A. Sui-Tang Writers of History

Who wrote the histories and compiled Sui-Tang government documents? It is important to recognize a rough division between “literati Confucians” (*wenru*) and pragmatic officials working in government (Skaff 2009b, 170–9).<sup>1</sup> The former also were called “book-men” (*shusheng*) and had a distinctive identity based on dress, social style, and education in Confucian classics, history, philosophy, exegetical literature, and poetry. They were more likely to specialize in scholarly pursuits (McMullen 1988, 9, 159–205).<sup>2</sup> The pragmatists tended to be educated, but less erudite, studying tomes such as *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *History of the Han* that provided practical lessons on government, political intrigue, and warfare (McMullen 1988, 70, 79, 163–4; Wechsler 1980, 5). Pragmatists generally seem to have been northerners who aspired to the ideal that a man should master civil and

military skills (Graff 2000; Wechsler 1980, 1–9). The cultural identities of pragmatic and literati Confucians were not always clearly distinct, and probably should be viewed as running along a continuum. For example, Pei Xingjian (619–682) managed to become a paragon to both sides because of his scholarly, administrative, and military accomplishments (Skaff 2009b, 349–50).

Although both types of officials served in the bureaucracy, the literati Confucians appear to have been more likely to hold positions that required scholarly and literary talents. During court debates they sometimes faced ridicule for offering military or strategic advice that was overly influenced by their ideological bias against the army and imperial expansion (Skaff 2009b, 176). Despite a lack of experience on the frontier, their dominance of the Chancellery and Historiography Office has tended to distort our understanding of Sui-Tang relations with Inner Asia. They were inclined to ignore or downplay the importance of provincial and frontier affairs, and to suppress the views of their enemies at court, such as military men and pragmatic bureaucrats (Honey 1990; Pulleyblank and Beasley 1961; Twitchett 1962, 1992; Wechsler 1980). The writings of literati Confucians treat Turko-Mongols and other inhabitants of borderlands with attitudes ranging from suspicion to outright hostility.

### B. Elite Discourses on Frontiers and “Barbarians”

Literati Confucians certainly did not conceive of the Tang frontier as a borderland. Rather, they idealized the frontier as a border dividing the Middle Kingdom (Zhongguo) from foreign lands.<sup>3</sup> An example is a memorial of 697 mentioning that the ancient kings’ frontier borders were defended from the barbarians (*yidi*) by the sea in the east, flowing sands in the west, the Gobi Desert (Damo) in the north, and the Five Mountain Passes in the south (JTS 89:2889–2891; QTW 169:2b-5a; WYYH 694:7a-9b; Skaff 2009a, 174). The Middle Kingdom was envisioned as a “culture island” surrounded by geographical barriers, but these physical obstructions were far more permeable than the rhetoric would suggest. For example, this conception of the Gobi as a barrier ignores, as the previous chapter noted, that the China-Inner Asia borderlands—rich in grasslands inhabited by Turko-Mongols—lay south of the desert in close proximity to the Sui-Tang capital. Despite the weak basis in reality, this geographical worldview has had a strong hold on the imaginations of literati Confucians and modern historians.

Likewise, literati Confucian rhetoric tended to stereotype the empire as culturally unified, rather than as pluralistic. The memorial envisions a clear divide between the barbarians and the Middle Kingdom. Sui-Tang literati generally assumed that the populace of the empires shared a culture or ethnicity that they described using a number of imprecise terms such as *Hua*, literally meaning “glorious” culture, or the names of past dynasties, especially Xia and Han (Abramson 2003, 149, n. 24; Chun-shu Chang 2007, 294–6, n. 2; Mair 2005, 51–3, n. 15). It is well documented

that the Chinese tradition contained a vast array of negative stereotypes about foreigners, including Turko-Mongols. Some terms, such as *yidi*, carry derogatory connotations that justify a translation of “barbarian” (Abramson 2003; Honey 1990; Sinor 1978). Another term, *fan*, has a more neutral tone that can be rendered as “foreigner” (Beckwith 2009, 359). Despite the use of these stereotypical and generic expressions, Tang geographical and historical records include relatively copious information on the customs and histories of states and peoples beyond the frontier. The Chinese names of foreign peoples tended to be derived from the self-appellations in native languages. For example, “Türk” was rendered fairly accurately as “Tujue” in Chinese (Golden 2008/2009, 75–6). Even though precise and realistic terminology was available to describe foreign peoples, literati Confucians rhetoric implicitly assumed that the Middle Kingdom was ethnically Han and barbarians were inferior outsiders. This book will adopt “Han” as the standard reference to ethnicity. The term “Chinese” will refer to language.

Such stereotypes were inadequate to describe the culture of the empire not only because Turko-Mongols and other peoples were incorporated into a pluralistic realm, but also because the Sui-Tang empires lacked a clearly defined notion of Han identity. Though a thorough study of this topic is beyond the scope of this book, it is necessary to point out that Sui-Tang society was riven by regional and status differences. For example, contemporary observers, like the eighth century historian Liu Fang, believed that people’s customs differed depending on their geographical origin.

The people east of the mountains [Hebei and Shandong] are unsophisticated and honest, and so they esteem marriage connections. Their sincerity is worthy of praise. Those of Jiangzuo [the Yangzi valley] are highly cultured and so esteem individual worth. Their wisdom is admirable. In Guanzhong [southern Shaanxi], the people are brave and manly and so esteem office holding. Their perception is admirable. The people of Daibei [northern Shanxi] are martial and so esteem noble relationships. Their breadth of mind is admirable (Guisso 1978, 73).

Liu’s perception of regional differences assumes that customs of the high elite were the norm of each region. His typology hints at different strategies that the elite families used to maintain social status. Some chose to emphasize cultural attainment (*wen*) while others placed more stress on military prowess (*wu*), the classic dichotomous paradigm of Chinese masculinity (Louie 2002, 9–17).

Northwestern eminent lineages of Guanzhong and Daibei—of mixed Han and Inner Asian ancestry—produced the dynastic founders of the Northern Zhou, Sui, Tang, and Empress Wu’s Zhou. Despite their diverse backgrounds, prominent northwestern families identified themselves as Han and sought to balance *wen* and *wu* to prepare sons for civil and military careers.<sup>4</sup> A century after the founding of the

Tang, Emperor Xuanzong fit their ideal of Han manhood. He had a deep knowledge of Daoist philosophy and was an accomplished poet, calligrapher, and musician, but also a lover of vigorous pursuits such as hunting, hawking, and polo that would have required skill at archery and horse riding (Schafer 1957, 302–5; Twitchett 1979a, 333). On the other hand, eminent lineages of Hebei, Shandong, and the lower Yangzi were more likely to prepare sons solely to serve in the civil bureaucracy. They cultivated an image of cultural superiority by intermarrying among themselves, raising sons who were immersed in the Confucian classics, and disdaining military pursuits and foreigners. During the period of Sārbi rule of the Northern Wei and its successor states, they took pride in preserving what they believed was an orthodox version of Han culture (Twitchett 1973, 50–1). Under the Tang, men of northeastern and southern eminent lineages apparently were more likely to become literati Confucians who entered government by passing civil service exams. The majority of men who rose to the highest civil post of grand councilor were also from the northeastern and southern eminent lineages.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, men from the northwest who passed civil service exams seemed more likely to become pragmatic bureaucrats (Pulleyblank 1955, 47).

The eminent lineages enjoyed a great degree of prestige and fame, but local elites could rise to overshadow their social superiors in wealth and power. Locally prominent families also demonstrated cultural patterns that contradict some of Liu Fang's perceived regional differences. Throughout North China, including the northeast, local martial elites (*haojie*) cultivated military skills, engaged in interethnic marriage relations, and played an important role in the early Tang military (Chen 1972–3a). Although we lack information on the Sui-Tang south, evidence from the Southern Dynasties demonstrates that military exploits also could be a path to local or imperial power (Chittick 2010; Pearce et al. 2001, 24–6). This brief discussion is far from definitive, but given the status, regional, and lifestyle differences among elites, and supposing that commoners exhibited even greater diversity, it is obvious that “Han” identity during the Sui and Tang deserves more extensive and critical inquiry.

Just as elite Han identity showed variety, perspectives on frontier relations with Turko-Mongol peoples also were not monolithic. Despite the xenophobic sentiments in the received texts, Turko-Mongols were included in the Sui-Tang empires, the result partly of incidental conquest and incorporation, and partly of conscious debate and policy implementation. The Tang dynasty's defining episode of decision-making came in 630, after Taizong's forces conquered the First Türk Empire in Inner Mongolia. The court debate that ensued, about how to handle the Türks, is the best preserved Tang foreign policy discussion regarding nomads, perhaps because it was viewed as establishing a precedent. The debate reveals that there were diverse contemporary perspectives on the nature of Turko-Mongols, with some officials wishing to include nomads in the Middle Kingdom and others seeking to exclude them.

The majority of the extant speeches from the court discussion are from literati Confucians, which probably reflects the literati's prejudices in choosing which texts to preserve (Wechsler 1980, 32–40; Skaff 2009b, 170). Officials with known involvement in the debate mainly appear to have formed their opinions about Turko-Mongols based on book learning, and can be divided into categories of inclusivists and exclusivists. The latter group argued according to typical stereotypes that “Northern Barbarians” were bestial and disloyal. The words of the famous literati, Wei Zheng (580–643), who descended from a local elite lineage in the northeast, are representative of the exclusivists: “The Xiongnu had a man’s face and a beast’s heart. They were not of our lineages (*zulei*). When they were strong, they raided and looted. When they were weak, they were meek and compliant. To not feel gratitude was their nature” (JTS 194a:5162; Pan 1997, 186). Wei proposed to return them to their former territory outside the great bend of the Yellow River in Inner Mongolia. On the other side, the inclusivists argued that the Türks should become part of the empire. Allegedly, the majority of the inclusivists favored forced assimilation, having a negative view of Türks as nomads, but believing that they were humans whose natures were transformable. They proposed exiling the Türks to the distant and ecologically alien region south of the Yangzi River to “practice agriculture to change their customs. One million barbarian prisoners can be sinicized [literally, ‘obtain transformation into Han’]. Then the Middle Kingdom will receive the benefit of increased population and the northern frontier will be empty.”<sup>6</sup> This group of officials devalued the pastoral nomadic lifestyle, but felt that the Türks could be neutralized as a threat and contribute to the economic development of the empire’s southern frontier as farmers. Their plan to “sinicize” the Türks reveals ignorance about Inner Asian geography and pastoral nomadism because even if Inner Mongolia were emptied of Türks, other Turko-Mongols eventually would have migrated there to exploit the rich grasslands.

Two inclusivist officials present at the debate, who had had experience dealing with the Türks, advocated integration without assimilation. Taizong eventually would adopt certain elements of their suggestions. The general, Dou Jing (d. 635), who belonged to an eminent northwestern lineage, had negative feelings about the Türks, using common stereotypical expressions to say “barbarians (*yidi*) spy for an advantageous opportunity and then flock like birds and swarm like beasts [to attack]. . . One cannot control them with laws and punishments nor teach them benevolence and righteousness. They are incapable of farming and weaving.” Despite his low opinion of the Türks, he favored leaving them in Inner Mongolia, to be governed indirectly through their chiefs, so they could serve as a defensive shield against nomadic attacks from the Mongolian Plateau (THY 73:1312–4; JTS 61:2369; ZZTJ 193:6076; Pan 1997, 185). Unlike those favoring inclusion predicated on assimilation, Dou saw some value for the Türks as nomadic warriors, but did not think that they could be transformed into farmers.

Another participant in the debate, Grand Councilor Wen Yanbo, took the most positive inclusivist position toward the Türks. Wen was from an eminent northern

Shanxi lineage and held civil positions in the early Tang government. His experiences diverged from most of his peers because he was captured while serving as a logistics administrator on a campaign against the Türks in 625. Although he spent about two years in captivity and allegedly was interrogated harshly, he returned to the Tang court with an optimistic attitude toward the Türks (JTS 61:2360–1; XTS 91:3782; ZZTJ 191:5997, 192:6021). His argument in the debate appears to have been informed by his education in historical and philosophical texts, as well as his first-hand experience among the Türks. Using history as a guide, he proposed following the example of the Han dynasty, which had moved the surrendered Southern Xiongnu nomads relatively close to Chang'an in the grasslands of the Ordos Plateau to serve as a defensive shield against the still hostile Northern Xiongnu in Mongolia. Wen states explicitly that the Türks should be allowed to follow their pastoral nomadic lifestyle. Philosophically, Wen drew upon the universalist strain of the Confucian tradition to claim that the Türks can be taught laws and ritual protocol (*li*) to control their behavior. When Wen quoted Confucius to support this argument, “In teaching there should be no distinction of classes,” he implied that racial or ethnic groups were among the classes that should not be barred from education (Legge [1893] 1960, 305). Wen’s thoughts echo those of his teacher, Wang Tong (ca. 584–617), who argued that the Särbi rulers of the Northern Wei were legitimate, despite foreign ancestry, because they followed the “Way of the Former Kings.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, Wen’s personal experience may have convinced him that showing the Türks benevolent charity (*deze*)—giving them a place to live and allowing them to keep their customs—would win their gratitude (THY 73:1312–4; JTS 61:2361; ZZTJ 193:6076–7; ZGZY 9:325).<sup>8</sup> Wen Yanbo, like Dou Jing, believed that nomads could serve as a valuable military asset, but Wen differs from Dou in his estimation of their natures. Wen saw the Türks as humans who could become pastoral nomadic members of the Tang political community by learning its laws and customary notions of protocol.

Although the debate over the fate of the Türks reveals a diversity of contemporary perspectives toward pastoral nomads—including a frequently suppressed or ignored discourse advocating their inclusion in the Tang Empire—imperial prerogative determined policy. The emperor at the time, Taizong, had a great deal of prior military experience fighting and negotiating with the Türks. When Taizong, who was a highly competent emperor, decided to implement Wen’s proposal for an inclusive policy, he must have made hard-nosed calculations of the potential drawbacks and benefits of this plan. Nonetheless, there has been a tendency to romanticize him as an exceptional individual for his age, who was uniquely free of personal prejudice (Ho 1998, 131–6; Pan 1997, 182). This image partly derives from Taizong’s statement near the end of his life in 647, explaining the success of his foreign policy. “Since ancient times, every [emperor] has valued the Central Glorious Realm (Zhonghua) and disparaged barbarians (*yidi*). Only I have loved them both equally, therefore the tribes have looked upon me as their parent” (ZZTJ 198:6247;



Pan 1997, 182).<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to determine whether this rhetoric actually represented Taizong's personal views, because his statements about nomads often varied depending on the audience. As the eminent Tang specialist, Howard Wechsler, has noted, Taizong was "a shrewd and artful manipulator of his public image. . . we occasionally receive the impression that the emperor's behavior and speeches were conditioned less by his own personal convictions than by his 'feel' for his audience" (Wechsler 1974, 82).<sup>10</sup> Wechsler's observation may explain Taizong's somewhat contradictory actions and opinions. For example, in 639 he decided to transfer the Türks north of the Yellow River. According to most sources, this measure was taken in retaliation for a Türk chieftain's assassination attempt on him. He used stereotypical Confucian expressions, telling court officials "the Middle Kingdom is the roots and trunk, the four barbarians are the branches and leaves. I did not heed Wei Zheng's counsel [in 630] and nearly fell to the wolves!" Here he perhaps is seeking the approbation of Wei and other literati Confucians at court who would be compiling the historical records of his reign. Another account of this incident mentions that Taizong's true intention was to counter the growing power of the Sir-Yantuo in Mongolia. In a letter informing their ruler, Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan, about the move of the Türks, Taizong again panders to his audience by painting himself as a benefactor of nomads. "I cherish their tribes like children, no differently than our commoners" (JTS 194a:5163-4, 199b:5344; XTS 215a:6039; ZZTJ 193:6148-9; QTW 10:118).<sup>11</sup> In another case in January 634, Taizong humiliated a captured southern chieftain and the defeated Türk Illig Qaghan by ordering the former to sing and the latter to dance at the palace. Those in attendance, whose identities are not specified, laughed and said, "This is the first time in history that northern (*hu*) and southern (*yue*) barbarians have been part of the same family" (ZZTJ 193:6103). In this case, Taizong was treating foreigners as buffoons to accentuate his prestige as a great military conqueror. Two weeks later, Illig, the once proud Türk ruler, died, allegedly of a broken heart related to his humiliation. Taizong purportedly regretted his treatment of Illig and ordered the Türks to bury him according to their native customs. Here, Taizong's public display of respect for Türk traditions probably was meant to retain their loyalty. Overall, these incidents create the impression that Taizong was a cunning strategist who hid his true feelings and manipulated his image in order to maximize political gain. Although it probably is not possible to know Taizong's personal attitudes toward Turko-Mongols, his public rhetoric of equality under benevolent patrimonial rule was pitched to gain their allegiance and, most crucially, became de facto governmental policy throughout the first half of the dynasty.

Despite the inclusion of Turko-Mongols in the Tang Empire, attitudes of the Tang elite toward them continued to be divided. Members of northeastern and southern eminent lineages were scandalized that the government-sponsored genealogies of the social elite issued in 659 and 714 included "barbarians" and military officers who had gained recognition for service rendered to the dynasty (Guisso 1978, 77-81). Evidence that at least some Tang military officers continued to have

positive evaluations of Turko-Mongols serving in the military is evoked in one of the Northern Song's "Seven Military Classics," *Questions and Replies between Tang Taizong and Li Weigong [Li Jing]*. Even though the extant text is known to be embellished and is not a reliable indicator of Li Jing's opinions, the work probably reveals attitudes of late Tang military men.<sup>12</sup> In one passage, Li Jing allegedly was answering the emperor's question about the dispensation of Han and foreign (*fan*) troops in a newly established district for the Western Türks in 649:

When Heaven gave birth to men, originally there was no distinction of foreign (*fan*) and Han. But their territory is distant, wild, and desert like, and they must rely on archery and hunting to live. Thus they are constantly practicing fighting and warfare. If we are generous to them, show good faith, pacify them, and fully supply them with clothes and food, then they will all be men of the Han (TTLW 2:250–1; Sawyer and Sawyer 2007, 337).

The passage presumes that Han and the foreigners shared a common humanity, and that cultural distinctions were geographically determined. The author has used a neutral expression, *fan*, to refer to foreigners rather than one of the more derogatory terms at his disposal. Like Taizong, the author expresses the opinion that Turko-Mongols could become members of an empire that included Han. Also echoing Taizong, there is an emphasis on personal relationships and material rewards as the key to winning their allegiance, which later chapters will demonstrate met the customary expectations of nomads.

Turko-Mongols submitting to the Sui-Tang empires were not entering an idyllic haven of social harmony. Ethnic prejudices were complemented by negative stereotypes based on regional, educational, or status differences. For example, when Grand Councilor Chu Suiliang, who belonged to a distinguished southern lineage, told Emperor Gaozong that he opposed the elevation of the future Empress Wu from her original status as concubine, she exploded from a hidden position behind a screen, "Why does no one come forward and butcher this southwestern barbarian (*liao*)?" (XTS 105:4029; ZZTJ 199:6290; Rothschild 2008b, 34). In another case, the southern literati Confucian, Zhang Jiuling, admitted to Xuanzong that his native place was inferior to that of a pragmatic official, Niu Xianke, who was from the capital region. Despite Zhang's perception of regional inferiority, he still felt superior to Niu because the latter was "a minor official on the distant frontier [who] has no acquaintance with books" (ZZTJ 214:6823; Twitchett 1979a, 408). High status nomadic chieftains with wealth and political power had their own prejudices toward commoners, whether of Han or Turko-Mongol backgrounds, which was typical of steppe society (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 337). In one case, elites of the Toghuz-Oghuz frontier tribes in Hexi displayed disdain for the ethnically Han soldier, Wang



Junchuo, because he was a commoner. But when Wang rose to high status as Hexi Military Commissioner in the 720s, he showed disrespect toward the tribal chiefs, who were now his subordinates (JTS 103:3191–2, 195:5198; XTS 133:4547–8, 217a:6114; ZZTJ 213:6776–9). In another example, the emperor valued the low-born Turko-Sogdian Military Commissioner, An Lushan, for his military talent, but many high status Han and Turko-Mongol officials scorned him because of his lowly background, including, Abuz Yabghu, a Turkic chief serving the Tang. Even though An Lushan outranked Abuz in the Tang military, Abuz treated An as a social inferior. An in turn hated Abuz (ZZTJ 216:6910–1; des Rotours 1962, 125, 148; Kamalov 2003, 87). Political and personal conflicts were at the heart of most of these expressions of regional or class prejudice.

This brief discussion of ethnicity, regionalism, and status in the Tang hints at the social complexity of the realm. It was an age of paradoxes. Social prejudice was acceptable, but talented individuals could find opportunities to rise above their birth status. Eminent Turko-Mongols with wealth and political connections might feel free to humiliate lowborn Han. The social realities of the Sui and Tang empires normally have been overlooked because of the narcissistic predilection of literati Confucian authors to document each other's achievements and give cursory attention to other people living in a multiethnic empire.

### C. Legal and Administrative Concepts of Ethnicity

Other factors obscuring the social composition of the Tang Empire were the norms of the legal-administrative system, which gave much less consideration to documenting race or ethnicity than ascribing social status. *The Tang Code* (TLSY), the dynasty's official compendium of penal law, divided people into three social strata—privileged (imperial relatives and officials), commoners (free individuals), and inferior (slaves, bound retainers, and bondsmen)—and stipulated punishments that varied in harshness according to the offender's position in the social hierarchy.<sup>13</sup> Ethnicity theoretically did not play a role in dispensing justice. Some parts of the code envision a clear territorial and cultural divide between foreigners and inhabitants of the Tang Empire. One article states “frontier customs barriers divide Han (*hua*) from barbarians (*yi*)” (TLSY 8:177–8, art. 88; Johnson 1997, 55–6).<sup>14</sup> Other parts of the code acknowledge the existence of foreign visitors and immigrants in the Tang realm. One article recognizes the possibility of communities of aliens (*huawairen*), literally “people from outside of civilization.” The subcommentary to this article defined aliens as people from “foreign barbarian” (*fanyi*) polities who “have their own rulers and leaders. They each have their own habits and customs, and their regulations and laws are not alike.” Consequently, aliens of common origin who committed crimes against each other were to be sentenced according to their own customary laws, but those involved in interethnic crimes were to “be sentenced following [Tang] law” (TLSY 6:133, art. 48; Franke 1992, 113–4; Johnson 1979, 252). Going even further

toward recognizing the existence of interethnic relations within the empire, a “special regulation” acknowledged that foreign (*fan*) men could take Han women as wives or concubines, but forbade the men from taking the women back to their native countries (TLSY 8:177–8, art. 88; Johnson 1997, 55–6). *The Tang Code* envisions a multiethnic empire where resident alien communities enjoyed internal legal autonomy. When ethnic interactions and intermarriages occurred, Tang law applied equally to all regardless of race or ethnicity. Franke (2004, 4) calls this legal system “color blind.”

Like the legal system, the census and tax administration was primarily concerned with documenting status, but gave somewhat greater attention to ethnicity than the penal code. Administratively, the Tang Empire was separated into what can be considered inner and outer zones. The inner region of the empire was divided into more than 300 prefectures (*zhou*) and superior prefectures (*fu*) that answered directly to the central government. Heading each prefecture was a prefect who was appointed by the emperor. Prefectures in turn were divided into constituent counties (*xian*) that were headed by magistrates. Prefects and magistrates were responsible for the fiscal and legal administration of the territory under their jurisdiction (Twitchett 1970, 105). A major function of regular provincial administration was to collect taxes. Through the middle of the eighth century, most Tang revenue was derived from the “equal field” system, which the dynasty had adopted from the Sui via preceding northern dynasties. The emperor theoretically owned all of the land and periodically redistributed it to his subjects on the basis of household size. In return each household owed the government taxes in the form of grain, cloth, and corvée labor or a labor exemption tax in cloth (Twitchett 1970, 1–6, 25–6). Effective implementation of the system required that magistrates keep accurate records of household size and tax obligations (Ikeda 1973, 124–6). Magistrates and their assistants ranked households into nine grades based on wealth, and noted each individual’s age and status within the family (wife, son, daughter, slave, servant, etc.) or the wider society (commoner, official position, etc.) in order to determine liability for taxation and eligibility for land grants or tax exemption (Twitchett 1970, 1–6, 24–8; Yamamoto and Dohi 1985, 7–8). Ethnicity or race was not recorded because it normally had no bearing on tax status of those living in regular prefectures.

Foreigners theoretically did not live in the regular prefectures and instead inhabited an outer zone of “bridle” (*jimi*) counties, prefectures, and area commands in which indigenous leaders handled internal affairs (XTS 43b:1109). The Chinese compound *jimi* literally means “horse bridle” and “ox halter.” The term suggests Tang administrative attitudes toward “barbarians,” in which Han are equated with “humans” who use bridles and halters to control ethnic groups who are analogous to beasts of burden. In addition, the differentiation between the headgear of horses and oxen suggests the varied peoples that the Tang aspired to rule. Horses were associated with the pastoral nomads of Inner Asia. Likewise, oxen symbolized southern China where indigenous farmers used them as beasts of burden, ate their flesh, and in some places even rode them (Schafer 1967, 223–4). When the two

characters are placed together, the resulting compound *jimi*, can mean to “connect,” “entice,” “control,” or “imprison.” The term *jimi* was coined during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), but in its original sense referred to the dynasty’s so-called “loose rein” diplomatic strategies toward independent countries. Tang bridle-halter prefectures more closely resemble the earlier Han dynasty’s dependent states (*shu-guo*), initially established to accommodate the surrendered Southern Xiongnu tribes (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 259; Pan 1992a, 43–53; Yü 1967, 65–89; Zhao 1993, 84–91). As in the case of the Han dependent states, Tang emperors appointed indigenous rulers as officials who were responsible for governing their own people. *Jimi* is often translated as “loose rein” based on Han diplomatic usage of the term, but this book will render *jimi* succinctly as “bridle” to better capture the Tang connotation of control.<sup>15</sup>

Although the *New Tang history* (XTS 43b:1119) claims that bridle prefectures generally did not forward tribute, taxes, and census records to the Ministry of Revenue, there are indications that “barbarian” communities sometimes were registered and taxed. The *Old Tang history* (JTS) contains evidence of registration in the form of census figures of pastoral nomadic tribes in the northern tier of the empire (chapter 8, Table 8.1). Surviving administrative statutes also stipulate that “barbarian” subjects be taxed. The two earliest articles, dating to 624, indicate that “barbarians” were to receive favorable tax rates assessed in goods that were produced by their local economies. One—dealing specifically with pastoral nomads and mentioning levies in sheep and coins—will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The other statute mentions that “southwestern barbarian” (*yiliao*) households were to pay their tax in rice at half the regular rate. The same article exempted Koguryan and Paekchean (Korean) soldiers from taxes and labor service (Niida 1933, 673, art. 7; Twitchett 1970, 142). It is uncertain whether these southern and northeastern peoples lived interspersed in regular prefectures or resided in bridle prefectures.

Eighth-century statutes continue this pattern of “tax breaks” to attract “barbarians” to the empire. One dating from 737 indicates that “southwestern barbarians” living in distant frontier prefectures were subject to labor service and other taxation, but the “amount should be determined according to circumstances, and need not be the same as Han (*huaxia*)” (TD 6:109; Niida 1933, 679–80, art. 12; Twitchett 1970, 144). In 719 “newly pacified barbarians (*yidi*)” received three years of tax remission (Niida 1933, 682, art. 17; Twitchett 1970, 145). A statute of 737 increased tax forgiveness to ten years for “foreigners” (*waifan*) who “submit to civilization (*hua*).” The same article remits taxes for “those” who return after being captured by foreigners (Niida 1933, 682, art. 16; Twitchett 1970, 145). Obviously, the 737 statute attempts to deal with previously unforeseen circumstances under which various people were going back and forth between foreign and Tang rule. The social and political realities that this statute was attempting to manage will become apparent below and in future chapters. Another early eighth-century statute decreed that male offspring born to “surrendered barbarians” be registered as “commoners,”

administratively erasing their foreign background (TLD 3:36b–37a; Niida 1933, 61–5). Overall, these tax statutes give the impression that the Tang government considered foreigners desirable to attract to the empire with the expectation that the next generation would become commoners indistinguishable from Han.

## II. Borderland Complexities

Despite Confucian intellectual and legal-administrative traditions that have obscured the history of the China-Inner Asia borderlands and its inhabitants, scattered references to local frontier society and history can be gleaned from received textual sources, and even more importantly, Tang local records that were excavated in the twentieth century, such as the Turfan documents. This type of evidence, although anecdotal, demonstrates that regular prefectures, classified in Map 1.2 (in chapter 1) as borderland and borderland periphery, were even more ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse than central records might lead us to suspect.

### A. Cultural Interaction and Adaptation

Guannei, the Tang circuit that included the capital of Chang'an, contained borderland and borderland periphery prefectures whose inhabitants during the Northern Dynasties were a mixture of Han, Särbi, and other ethnicities practicing agriculture or agro-pastoralism (Pearce 1987, 69–99). During the Sui-Tang transition, one group of people inhabiting the region was the Jihu. They lived on either side of the Yellow River in central and northern Guannei and Hedong (Pulleyblank 1994; Rothschild 2005). The Jihu practiced agriculture, but retained a distinct ethnic identity based on their physical appearance, religion, customs of women, local products, and in some cases, language. Although there are competing stories about their ethnic origins and language, they apparently had foreign facial features because one account says that they had “Barbarian heads and Han tongues.” Nevertheless, many Jihu must have retained their native language, because another account mentions that only the chiefs had knowledge of Chinese (YHJX 3:72–5; Pulleyblank 1994, 501, 523–6). The men’s customs were similar to borderland Han in dress and martial ethos, while women were more culturally distinct because they wore shell jewelry and freely engaged in sexual relations before marriage. They also produced unique textiles known as “barbarian female linen” (*hu'nübu*) or “Ji female linen” (*nü Ji bu*).<sup>16</sup> Local Buddhism had several distinctive features, including worship of the image of a Jihu Buddhist saint, and construction of earthen pagodas with cypress flagpoles to which silkworm cocoons were tied (Pulleyblank 1994; Rothschild 2005). During the transitional civil war between the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Jihu were among borderland inhabitants who did not necessarily consider their incorporation into a China-based empire as inevitable or desirable. In Guannei, Jihu

raided Tang territory in alliance with Türks and Han warlords in the early 620s. After several years of warfare and a split with their former allies, the Jihu voluntarily submitted to Tang rule in 626 (ZZTJ 185:5785, 188:5886, 5900, 189:5906, 5911, 191:6018). During this period, the Jihu never seem to have been unified. Different Jihu elements experimented with independence, predatory raiding, and alliance with borderland warlords. In the end, many Jihu were killed, but the survivors accepted Tang rule once they ran out of alternatives.

Even after the consolidation of Tang power, Guannei's borderland culture continued to exhibit ethnic diversity and cultural fluidity. In 679 the "Six Hu Prefectures" were founded in central Guannei with "Tang people" (Tang *ren*) serving as prefects overseeing Türk tribes (chapter 8, note 13). The identities of the prefects are unknown, leading some scholars to interpret "Tang people" to mean Han Chinese (Pulleyblank 1952, 326). However, some light has been thrown on the identity of "Tang people" by the archaeologically excavated tomb epitaph in Chinese of a local military commander with the "He" surname. Although Commandant He (616–700), whose given name is unknown, was not a prefect, his background provides evidence that representatives of the Tang government in the area were not necessarily Han. He was the fourth generation of a military family that had served dynasts of the Northern Zhou and Tang. The "He" surname is typical of Sogdians in China, but this family claimed descent, probably fictitiously, from the Yuezhi who ruled over Bactria and Sogdia in ancient times (Ningxia 1988, 55–6). The tomb design and decoration syncretically mix Tang, Sogdian, and other unknown elements (Lerner 2001, 250–3; Luo 2001, 242–3). Presumably, if men like Commandant He were representative of local administrators and military officers, they were "Tang people" by virtue of their service to the dynasty, not their cultural preferences.

Sogdians and others exhibiting a high degree of cultural fluidity remained in the region into the eighth century. Native households were reorganized into two prefectures in 702 and then six counties under Lanchi Area Command in 707. By 721, 70,000 "Lanchi Hu" and Tangut tribes rebelled. What was the identity of a Lanchi Hu? From the perspective of Emperor Xuanzong, they were "honest and obedient commoners, the same as Han (*huaxia*)" who had been registered Tang subjects for a long time (CFYG 986:19a–b; TZLJB 33:1472). On the other hand, the names and titles of the leadership of the insurrection were highly syncretic. The two highest-ranking rebels, Kang Daibin and An Murong, took the Turkic title of *yabghu*. Both had Sogdian surnames, but their given names had different derivations. Daibin was typically Chinese, while Murong was the transliterated Chinese version of a Mongolic name belonging to the eminent lineages of the Särbi and Tuyuhun. Despite the brutal suppression of the rebellion, by the 740s a regular prefecture had been established on the site with a population of over 38,000 (JTS 8:182, 93:2988–9; XTS 111:4156; ZZTJ 212:6745–6, 6752, 214:6832; QTW 35:19b; TZLJB 33:1472–3 Pulleyblank 1952, 326–38). The relatively large number of inhabitants indicates that most of the residents were practicing farming or agro-pastoralism, not pastoral nomadism,

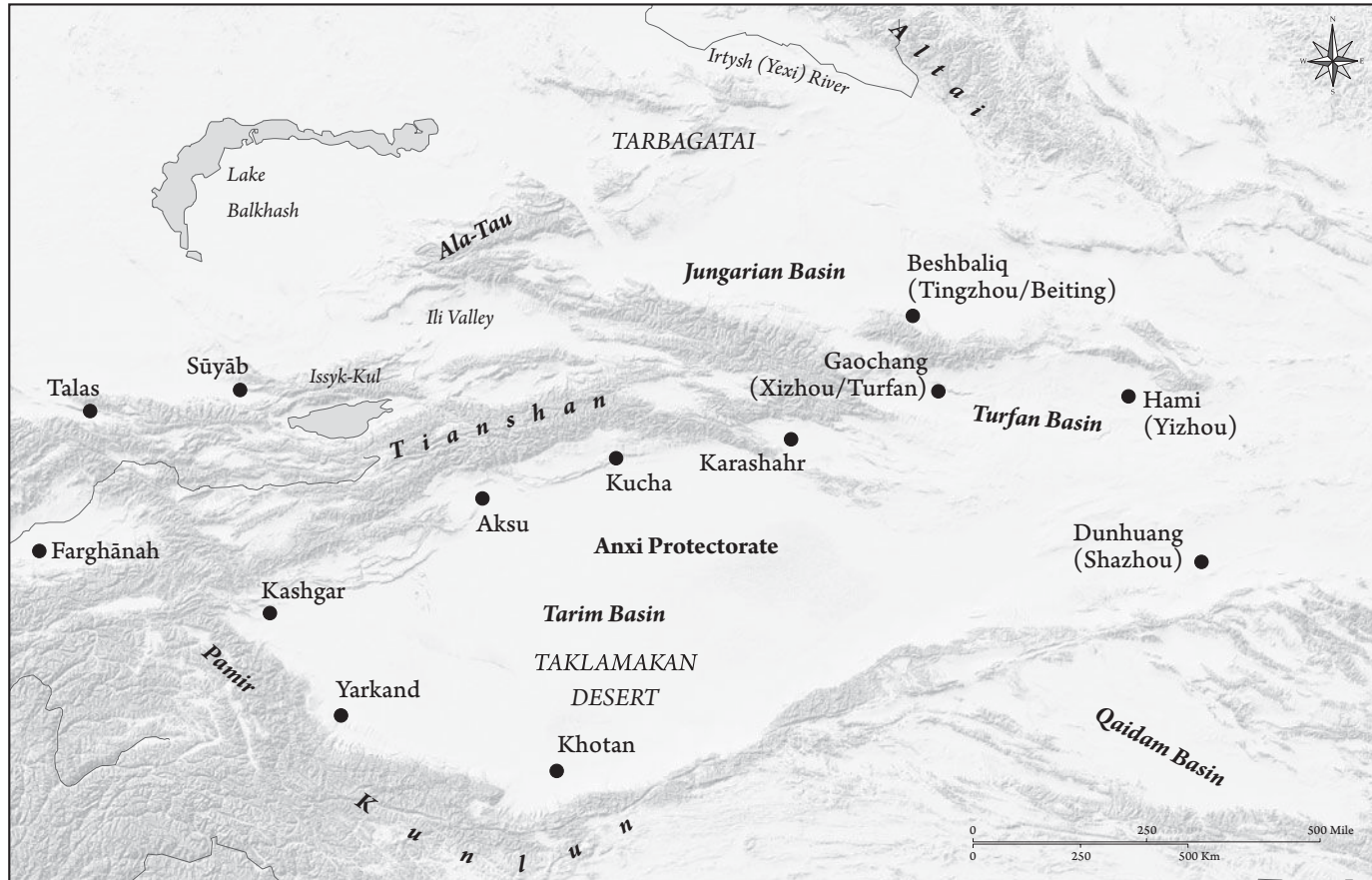
which requires a dispersed population. After the 722 revolt, Tang authorities discovered a large number of absconded households that had been living under the authority of Tangut bridle tribes directly south of Lanchi. The Tangut evidently had surreptitiously shielded farmers in their vicinity. The central government reasserted jurisdiction over the settled households, whose ethnicity is not known, by establishing a new county and registering the households for land distribution and taxation (JTS 38:1409; XTS 37:970). Three centuries later a Tangut tribal leader founded the Xi Xia Dynasty (Dunnell 1994, 1996), but already during the Tang, Tangut chiefs evidently had learned that they could enrich themselves by taxing sedentary farmers.

To the west of Guannei in Hexi, another borderland prefecture also exhibited signs of ethnic interactions. When the Tibetan-led forces besieged the Changle County seat in Guazhou Prefecture in 727, a portion of the “Tibetan” soldiers were married to “Han” women from the area (JTS 103:3192). The objective of the Tibetan mission was to plunder, and evidently a portion of the army was recruited locally from men interested in freebooting (JTS 103:3191–2; ZZTJ 213:6778; Beckwith 1987, 101–2). Even though the ethnicity of the soldiers is not known—they could have been Tibetans, Han, or from a variety of pastoral nomadic tribes—the incident is evidence of the potential plasticity of kinship or political ties in the borderlands. The only person mentioned in the account who exhibited resolute loyalty to the Tang was the centrally appointed county magistrate who steadfastly refused to open the lightly defended city to the raiders. Record of this incident was included in the history to celebrate the magistrate’s orthodox Confucian perspective on political allegiance to the Tang, but his views were not necessarily the norm in the more heterodox borderlands. Thirty years later, after the An Lushan rebellion, Guazhou fell under Tibetan rule. A century later, Uighur elites controlled the city. Several centuries after that, the Tangut Xi Xia Dynasty gained jurisdiction over Guazhou.

### B. Society and Economy of Turfan (Xizhou): A Case Study

Xizhou, meaning Xi Prefecture, presently known as Turfan (Tulufan), in China’s Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, provides an extraordinary opportunity to compare local records from a Tang prefecture with the received geographical and historical evidence (Maps 1.2 and 2.1). Turfan is a desert oasis in the northwestern portion of the Tang Empire with an arid climate that has preserved substantial numbers of medieval documents. Most of the Turfan documents are fragments of varying sizes and states of preservation, discovered during tomb excavations. The oasis was an important stop on the silk routes linking China with the west, but also possessed characteristics of the China-Inner Asia “borderland periphery” because it had a majority Han population, agriculture as the basis of the economy, and pastoral regions nearby to the north. Turko-Mongol rulers generally acted as the overlords of Turfan prior to the Tang conquest in 640 (Skaff 2002).





Map 2.1. Lands of Western Türks (Tang Anxi Protectorate, Mid-Seventh to Mid-Eighth Centuries)

Many non-Chinese names are identifiable in the Turfan documents because of scribal conventions. At a time when most people in Inner and West Asia did not have surnames, Chinese scribes created them for people of foreign origin from a shortened version of a person's ancestral country or tribe. In addition, given names in foreign languages often are readily identifiable because they were transliterated into Chinese with characters that approximated the sounds in the original language (Ikeda 1965, 61; 1993, 155). Finally, foreign travelers and visitors sometimes have their country of origin mentioned in official Tang documents. These methods are reliable positive indicators of people who ethnically are not Han, but are not perfect because they may not identify people of mixed ancestry or those who adopted typical Chinese language names (Mair 2005, 54). Despite imperfections, the Turfan documents provide a rare opportunity to learn about local society and economy in the Tang borderland periphery and test the reliability of the received geographical records.

The accounts of Xizhou in Tang geographical sources are terse, which is not unusual because the geographies typically are laconic descriptions of administrative arrangements and populations. The entry on Xizhou only has twelve lines in the 1975 edition of the *Old Tang history* (JTS 40:1644–5). The first four lines mention the founding of the prefecture in 640 after the Tang conquest of the formerly independent Gaochang Kingdom (Qocho), several changes in prefectural name and administrative status, population figures, and the distance from Chang'an. The following seven lines mention Xizhou's five constituent counties, their dates of establishment, and brief remarks on their histories and geographical features. Though the report mentions past periods of foreign rule, there is no indication of the ethnic composition of the contemporary population. *Maps and geography of the commanderies and counties of the Yuanhe reign* (YHJX 40:1030–1) has a fuller description of thirty-one lines with more information on local history, tribute, and travel routes, but the ethnicity of residents is still overlooked. Xizhou is classified as “borderland periphery” only because the tersest description of all, seven lines in the *New Tang history* (XTS 40:1046), mentions local tribute of felt, a typical Inner Asian fabric made from matted wool fibers (Basilov and Naumova 1989, 101–7). In contrast, the neighboring prefecture of Yizhou (modern Hami) is categorized as “borderland” because the *Old Tang history* mentions, “at the end of the Sui various western barbarians lived there” (JTS 40:1643). Thus, based on Tang geographies, it would be feasible to conclude that people with origins in West Asia congregated in Yizhou, but Xizhou was a thoroughly Han city where local artisans manufactured felt with wool purchased from the nearby steppe.

In contrast, the Turfan documents provide a new perspective on a previously overlooked local society that had a substantial population of ethnic minorities and a variety of steppe products. One fragmentary census registration document from Chonghua Township of Gaochang County lists twenty-nine out of forty-seven households with surnames indicating foreign ancestry. Based on analysis of surnames, twenty-five of the families were Sogdians, two were Indians, and two were



Kuchan. The township, like most other low-level administrative units, is not recorded in received geographical sources. Local authorities certainly recognized that the population of Chonghua included many ethnic groups because its name means “Venerate the Transformation [to Civilization],” demonstrating that local officials had a Confucian inclusivist inclination to assimilate these people into Han society. An appreciable number of Sogdians lived at other townships in Xizhou (Skaff 2003, 484–5, 515–9). Overall, the documents give the impression that Xizhou was a multiethnic prefecture with a majority Han population, a substantial minority of Sogdians, and a smattering of other peoples. However, Tang population registration procedures that ignored the ethnicities of inhabitants would have hidden the pluralistic nature of Xizhou society from geographers and historians working in the capital.

Other types of official and semi-official documents, travel permits, and contracts demonstrate that governmentally ascribed identities were based on categories of residency and official service, not ethnicity. Surviving travel permits—required for private long-distance travel within the Tang Empire—list many merchants of foreign origin. In a late seventh-century permit, one Sogdian, Kang Gecha, is designated as a “merchant western barbarian” (*xingshenghu*) because he was not a permanent resident of the empire. In the same document, other Sogdians acting as guarantors for a permit holder are designated “commoners” of various Tang prefectures in the northwest. These Sogdians were permanent residents of the empire. One, named Kang Aliao (Sog: Rēw), is called a “commoner” from Tingzhou and Yizhou.<sup>17</sup> Contracts exhibit similar patterns of ascribing identity. A 733 contract issued in Xizhou Market involved one Sogdian, Kang Sili, who was classified as a Tang military officer, selling a “frontier” horse to a Sogdian merchant, Shi Randian (Sog: Zhēmat-yān), who was designated a “commoner from Xizhou.” Two of the three guarantors, who vouched that the horse was not stolen, were Sogdians with different residency statuses: the “merchant western barbarian” An Dahan (Sog: Tarkhan) and the “Xizhou commoner” Shi Zaohan. The third guarantor is a “merchant western barbarian,” Luo Yena of unknown ethnicity (73TAM509:8/10 in TCWS 9:48–9; TCWS—plates 4:279; Yamamoto and Ikeda 1987, #32; Yoshida and Kageyama 2005, 306). In sum, the travel permits and contracts reveal mainly Sogdian travelers, buyers, sellers, and guarantors who probably had struck up relationships with each other based on shared backgrounds. Even though cultural affinity and shared business interests may have encouraged these merchants to form networks, it did not matter in the eyes of the government. The men were categorized as resident commoners, government soldiers or alien barbarians. Bureaucratic procedures tended to obscure the pluralistic nature of Xizhou’s society, and social and economic ties extending inside and outside of the empire.

One record of a legal conflict gives attention to ethnicity by distinguishing between Han and western barbarian (*hu*) litigants. The document—a legal judgment composed in Gaochang County of Xizhou and dating between 665 and 673—describes a dispute between long-distance merchants. On one side was Li

Shaojin a “Han from the capital” and on the other were two Sogdian brothers, Cao Lushan (Sog: Rokhshan), and Cao Yanyan, described as “western barbarians” with residences at the capital “who do not understand the Chinese language.” Li Shaojin lost the case when the guarantors testified that Li was lying.<sup>18</sup> The document provides evidence of interethnic personal and business relations in the northwestern borderlands, and demonstrates that being a resident alien merchant was not necessarily a barrier to justice.

For the most part, Sogdians mentioned in these documents represent Xizhou’s “Silk Road” ties with the outside world, but the previously mentioned contract for the sale of the “frontier horse” is a reminder that Turfan also had characteristics of the borderland periphery with ties to the grasslands. Pastoral lands to the north in the alpine steppe of the Tianshan Mountains and the plains of the Jungarian Basin had economic importance to Xizhou as a source of livestock and pastoral products (Map 2.1). The Turfan oasis is not suited to livestock husbandry because of environmental factors. It lies below sea level in a basin that suffers from intense summer heat and is surrounded by barren desert. In modern times horses are not bred there because of the high temperatures in the summer. Lack of forage also was a problem. In the late sixth and early seventh centuries, Turfan’s Gaochang Kingdom kept sheep herds in a secret place far away, presumably a secluded mountain valley in the Tianshan (SS 83:1847). In the early twentieth century, most wool was purchased from Mongol nomads descending from the Tianshan mountains (Lattimore [1951] 1962, 153; [1975] 1994, 36–7, 176, 199). These persistent environmental factors influenced demand for pastoral products in the local economy.

There is evidence of a private market for animals from the steppe in Tang Xizhou. A fragmentary register of Xizhou market prices from 742—the best surviving example of a type of document that officially-appointed market directors were supposed to draw up every ten days—recorded numerous goods for sale including local agricultural products, such as wheat flour and raisins, and imports from east and west along the silk routes, such as “Henan” ribbed-weave silk tabby (*shi*) and Persian camels (Ikeda 1992, 452–70; Trombert and La Vaissière 2007).<sup>19</sup> Pastoral items for sale included Turkic geldings, “spring white” sheep wool, and koumiss (*luo*) or fermented mare milk, which was usually considered a beverage of pastoral nomads, but was consumed in North China during the Tang (Schafer 1977, 106). These products came from the steppe regions to the north of Xizhou. Several other documents mention merchants heading southward from the Jungarian Basin across the Tianshan Mountains to Turfan. Their “merchandise” included sheep, cattle, and camels (Skaff 2003, 508, n. 84).

In addition to animals, pastoral areas also supplied labor to Xizhou. Demand for workers may have been high under Tang rule because of the need for frontier military personnel and casualties caused by warfare. For example, in the 707 Chonghua Township census register, more than half of adult males served as part-time guardsmen in the Tang military. Sixteen percent of adult Han women under sixty years old were

widows. Recruitment of Turko-Mongol soldiers will be discussed in chapter 8, but here it is pertinent to discuss demand for other types of labor. One merchant driving livestock from the Jungarian Basin also was bringing two young slaves with foreign names (Skaff 2003, 492–9, n. 49, 508). Definitive evidence of a Turkic slave in Xizhou comes from a legal deposition in a case from 665 in which a female “Türk slave” with a Chinese name meaning Spring Fragrance (Chunxiang) testified concerning the robbery of her Han master’s household. Apparently she had not learned to speak Chinese because the court employed a translator (66TAM61:22(a) and 66TAM61:23(a), 27/1 (a), 27/2(a) in TCWS 6:462–3, 465; TCWS—plates 3:238–9). Turkic peoples, like Spring Fragrance, were not the only slaves in Xizhou. For example, the sale of a Sogdian girl is documented in 639 on the eve of the Tang conquest (Yoshida 2003). Though the prevalence of slaves imported from Sogdia or the steppe is unknown, law and custom in China and Inner Asia condoned slavery (Golden 2001; Johnson 1979, 28–9). In the Tang realm Inner Asian slaves are known to have worked as herders, guards, translators, and dancers, and probably performed other tasks too (Hansen 1995, 41–2; Schafer 1963, 42–7).

Wage laborers also might come to Xizhou from the nearby steppe. In 762 a temporary resident (*xingke*) of unknown foreign origin hired a “commoner of the Chumi tribe” named Kang Shifen. Kang was driving an ox-cart for his employer when he injured two eight-year-old Sogdian children who had been playing outside of an inn, and as a result he ended up in a Tang court. He testified that the mishap was the result of his inexperience with the ox-cart (73 TAM509:8/1(a), 8/2(a) in TCWS 9:130; TCWS—plates 329–33; Hansen 2005, 297; Wu 2002, 12). Kang’s status as commoner indicates that he was considered a subject of the empire under the direct jurisdiction of his tribe. The Chumi were Turkic pastoral nomads, inhabiting the Tianshan Mountains and Jungarian basin to the north of Turfan, who had given allegiance to the Tang as a bridle tribe in the mid-seventh century.<sup>20</sup> Kang Shifen evidently took advantage of his inclusion in the Tang polity to pursue employment in the city of Xizhou.

Kang’s deposition does not mention a translator, so perhaps he was bilingual in Chinese and Turkic languages. Turfan documents provide direct indications of multilingualism in the population of Xizhou. Di Fuzhi[...] and a Sogdian, He Deli, translated between Turkic and Chinese (72TAM188:85 in TCWS 8:87; TCWS—plates 4:41). Another person, Di Na’nifan, translated for Sogdian traders (Hansen 2005, 296). Di Fuzhi[...] and Di Na’nifan have curious names. The surname Di is associated with the indigenous pre-Han inhabitants of Turfan, but their given names appear to be transliterations from Sogdian. Fuzhi corresponds to “Buti-” a Sogdian prefix to names meaning “Buddha.” Na’nifan is equivalent to Nanai-farn, literally, “glory to the goddess Nanai” (Yoshida and Kageyama 2005, 305–6). All of the translators appear to be at least partially Sogdian and trilingual in Chinese, Turkic, and Sogdian.

There also are signs that others in Xizhou and the surrounding region had full or partial mastery of two languages. The case of the Türk slave, Spring Fragrance, who

did not speak Chinese, raises the question of how she communicated with members of the Zhang household. Were some or all members of the Zhang family bilingual? More direct evidence that ethnic Han in Xizhou might learn some Turkic comes from an incident involving a Tang subject named Xiaode. Two hundred “bandits” on horseback kidnapped him. The captors obviously were pastoral nomads because they were “following the grass.” Xiaode understood the “barbarian language” of his nomadic captors, which most likely was Turkic. On his fourth day of captivity, Xiaode managed to free his hands and escape (65 TAM341:30/1(a) in TCWS 8:128–9; TCWS—plates 4:2). We know about his partial bilingualism because he told his perilous story to Tang authorities, but he must have developed these language skills while involved in more peaceful social interactions, perhaps in the marketplace. Likewise, some Turkic speakers appear to have learned Chinese. Direct evidence of Chinese speakers among borderland tribes comes from Tang military documents preparing scouts to defend Xizhou against an attack in 714. Two separate directives urged caution because “there are Chinese (*Hanyu*) speakers among the enemy” (Neiraku 20(3), 7(2) in NTWS 80–1; Hibino 1963, 269, 300–1). The Chuyue, a Turkic people living in the vicinity, were the only attackers specifically mentioned in these fragmentary documents, plausibly making tribe members the source of the Chinese speakers. Ironically, much of this anecdotal information about bilingualism was recorded because of its association with unfortunate events—a military attack, theft, kidnapping, and a cart accident—but we should not overlook that second languages probably were learned during amicable public encounters.

## Conclusion

The imperial Chinese intellectual and legal-administrative traditions have tended to obscure or degrade the role of Turko-Mongols and other borderland inhabitants of the Sui-Tang empires. People of Turko-Mongol, military, and low-status backgrounds have been marginalized in the historical record because of the prejudices of the literati Confucians who wrote histories and compiled government documents. Even though the legal and administrative systems were mainly “color blind,” focusing more on status than ethnicity, and sometimes even according favorable tax treatment to immigrants, the general disregard for ethnic or racial difference has had an unfortunate effect on historiography by obscuring the existence of Turko-Mongols and other peoples in the empire. As a result, premodern histories were imbued with the teleological assumption that the Sui and Tang had inherited rule from preceding dynasties of a Middle Kingdom that was a “territorial state” with a “homogenous community” (Duara 1995, 48–9). In the twentieth century, Chinese nationalists and historians who adhere to the concept of the Chinese worldview have readily appropriated these suppositions.<sup>21</sup>

In reality, the China-Inner Asia borderlands were a vast region of ethnic diversity and cultural adaptability. After Sui-Tang expansion, Chinese language and culture became one element of the cultural stew, but was not necessarily dominant. This case study of Xizhou prefecture demonstrates how the received historical sources overlook the social, political, and economic complexities of provincial or borderland areas. Tang geographical descriptions created the impression that Xizhou was a purely Han city. The Turfan documents help to correct that picture. Sogdians were the most prevalent ethnic minority residing in Xizhou, which is apparently attributable to migration and trade along the Silk Road. However, the influence of nearby Turko-Mongol peoples also is evident. Sometimes pastoral nomads arrived in stereotypically violent fashion “flocking like birds and swarming like beasts” to raid or kidnap, but the majority of evidence describes more prosaic, nonviolent interactions involving Turko-Mongols who came to work or trade. The China-Inner Asia borderlands incorporated overlapping ecologies and economies, as well as ambiguous identities. Succeeding chapters will amplify the role this broad territory played as a major site of Sui-Tang interactions with Turko-Mongols.

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PART TWO

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EASTERN EURASIAN SOCIETY  
AND CULTURE

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## Power through Patronage: Patrimonial Political Networking

Despite well-worn literati Confucian stereotypes about Han superiority to, and geographic separation from, foreigners, Turko-Mongols were incorporated into the Sui and Tang empires as individuals, serving mainly in the army, or as entire tribes, living in borderland grasslands. As mentioned in the Introduction, patrimonial patron-client bonding is the key to understanding this political phenomenon. Moreover, patrimonialism—and its corollary phenomena of patronage and alliances—is a valuable concept explaining the *personalistic* politics that permeated Sui-Tang bureaucratic institutions and Turko-Mongol khanates. Patrons, clients, and allies of various ethnicities could engage in informal, mutually acceptable, reciprocal relationships because there were widely shared values and expectations regarding political networking throughout Eastern Eurasia. Within the Sui-Tang and Türk empires, webs of political connections ramified invisibly. Individuals potentially took on multiple roles as clients to men of higher status, patrons to those of lower standing, and allies to equals. Sui-Tang emperors and Turko-Mongol qaghans ideally held positions at the apex of all political networks in the realm, serving as grand patrons.

A patron-client dyad in the context of contemporary politics can be defined as an exclusive and extra-legal political “relationship of mutual benefit which holds between two unrelated persons defined as socially and politically unequal, and which stresses solidarity.”<sup>1</sup> When the mutually beneficial political relationship is between social and political equals, it can be considered an alliance. A ruler was the most powerful patron because he controlled more resources than any other individual, but the phenomenon of patronage was not restricted to the sovereign. For example, in the Tang Empire powerful members of the civil bureaucracy, military, and local society used resources at their disposal to attract clients. For the most part, these patron-client relationships can be regarded as “informal” because patrons and clients generally did not have special legal or functional statuses that established rules and sanctions to regulate the relationship (Dittmer 1995). The vertical political bonds of Eurasia involved customary expectations that the client of lower status



would render loyal service to the patron in return for generous, but undefined remunerative, symbolic, and/or other rewards.<sup>2</sup> Naomi Standen (2007, 41–63) has called such bonds “relational,” since they were conditioned on two parties fulfilling mutual obligations. Charles Peterson (1970–1, 445) associates these values with Inner Asia, but Standen notes those living in North China shared similar assumptions during the first millennium.

In premodern Chinese history, patron-client bonds generally have not received adequate attention, most likely because clientage was informal and extra-legal or illegal. One common term for client (*ke*), literally “guest,” demonstrates that the Chinese conception of patron-client relations is related to the patrimonial household model of politics. Only a few studies have noted the existence of the patron-client phenomenon during the Han Dynasty and earlier (Ch’ü 1972, 127–35; Ebrey 1983). Historians of the Northern and Southern Dynasties Period, a time of political fragmentation and turbulence, have given relatively greater notice to the existence of extra-legal clients. With the breakdown of social order and the inability of various governments to enforce land registration and tax systems, local elites began to attract highly visible clients who served them as tenant farmers and private soldiers (Tang 1990). Various Chinese terms were used from the Warring States through Tang to describe elite and plebeian clients, and their modern translations are not standardized, which has tended to obscure the prevalence of the phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Modern historians of the Northern and Southern Dynasties generally have viewed the pervasiveness of patron-client ties as an *effect* of the social and political disorder of the times, but recently studies have argued persuasively that patronage was the *cause* of upheaval (Chittick 2010; Gan 2003, 291–311).

Like historians studying earlier periods, premodern and modern scholars of the Sui and Tang empires have not fully explored the significance of patrimonialism and corollary personalistic political relationships. The only legally sanctioned category of client in *The Tang Code* was the “bound retainer” *buqu*, which described tenant laborers on large estates who were legally bound to a master and did not have the right to governmental land allotments, somewhat akin to a medieval serf. This type of formal clientage does not appear to have been important in the early Tang (Tang 1990, 127–34; Tang 1983, 177–90). Other types of Sui-Tang informal patronage have not garnered much attention, but a typical *effect* of personalistic politics, “factionalism,” has been a hotly debated topic. Confucian historians, not surprisingly, took a moralistic approach, condemning military officers and pragmatic officials for forming so-called cabals (*dang*), but conveniently ignoring when so-called good emperors or literati Confucian officials used the same sorts of political networking. Modern historians of the Tang have noted the existence and corrosive effects of factionalism on court and bureaucratic politics.<sup>4</sup> Despite the value of these contributions, a more comprehensive investigation of the issue is needed that moves away from treating patronage and factionalism as a phenomenon of the capital elite.

Within Sui, Tang, and Turko-Mongols realms, cross-culturally shared expectations of rulers and clients contributed toward integrating a variety of ethnicities into their empires. To provide evidence of this cosmopolitan type of patrimonialism, this chapter will take a comparative approach, investigating Turko-Mongol khanates, local society during rebellions in North China, the Tang bureaucracy and frontier military, and the Sui-Tang imperial palaces. In the large Sui, Tang, and Türk empires, disparate elements of society were knit together politically by patrimonial rulership, vertical patron-client relationships, and to a lesser degree, horizontal alliances.

## I. Patron-Client Relationships in Inner Asia and North China

### A. Turko-Mongol Leaders

Turning first to the Turko-Mongols of Inner Asia, nomadic leaders behaved like patrimonial rulers, treating their realm as a household and cultivating three types of clients: close personal retainers, guard corps members, and the chiefs of tribes and tribal unions whose allegiances were necessary to build and maintain power (Barfield 1989, 5–8, 24–28; Ecsedy 1977, 8). Pastoral nomadic political culture required a ruler to treat retainers living in his camp as if they were members of his family by providing them with food, drink, and clothing. At the time of the Mongol Empire, tribal chiefs would journey from outlying areas on a regular basis to obtain rations and beautiful garments that displayed the majesty and generosity of the khan, and participate in obligatory drinking festivals (Allsen 1997, 53–7, 103–4). Personal bodyguard units formed the nucleus of the military of individual tribes or larger khanates (Beckwith 1984; Di Cosmo 1999b, 17). Rulers would cultivate the loyalty of these military clients with patrimonial techniques. Personal charisma and the ability to deliver rewards were the most important qualifications for successful leadership.

There are scattered indications that these types of clientage were common among the Turko-Mongol tribal groups contemporary with the Sui and Tang. Chinese sources use the same type of terminology to describe clients of Sui-Tang officials and members of a qaghan's retinue, referring to them with terms like trusted subordinate (*fuxin*) or confidant (*qinni*). For example, when the qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo, Duomi (d. 646), came to power, he dismissed his father's "high officials" and replaced them with his "confidants" (JTS 195:5195; XTS 217a:6111; ZZTJ 198:6236–8). Putting personally loyal clients into positions of authority was an essential aspect of consolidating rule on the steppe. Evidently, sons of qaghans had opportunities to cultivate these relationships from an early age. For example, a son of one Western Türk qaghan had a governor, tutor, and council of advisers (Golden 2002, 142–3). Qaghans stood at the pinnacle of tribal power, but those on lower levels of the hierarchy also cultivated clients. Among the Hephthalites—who dominated the western Eurasian steppe in the fifth century and probably were a mixture of

Iranian and Turkic nomads and semi-nomads—aristocrats commonly had personal retinues (Golden 1992, 81). In general, personal retainers would be expected to render service and give advice. For example, in September of 626 the Türks took advantage of the Tang emperor Taizong's recent usurpation of power to raid deep into the empire near Chang'an. Ilig Qaghan sent a "trusted subordinate" as an envoy to court to evaluate the situation evidently because he was a person of known loyalty and intelligence (JTS 194a:5157–8; XTS 215a:6033; ZZTJ 191:6019–20).

Chiefs typically built a foundation for military power by creating a bodyguard of close clients. Chinese sources mention that the Türk qaghans had personal guards called "wolves" (Turkic: *böri*, Chinese: *fuli*) (ZS 50:909; Golden 1998, 188). Later, when the Uighur came to rule Mongolia, they continued this practice. One qaghan had one thousand bodyguards whom he provided with meals and drinks three times per day in customary patrimonial manner (Beckwith 1984, 35). In a parallel fashion, elites of subordinate tribes also attracted personal bodyguards from the ranks of poor commoners (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 337–8). For example, a Turkic runic inscription discovered on the steppe of southern Siberia memorializes an otherwise unknown chieftain named Chubuch Inal. Despite becoming an orphan in his teens, during his twenties he fought successfully to create a tribal union that he ruled for forty years. He possessed vast herds and 150 "personal troops" (Vasilyev 1991, 123–4). Tibetan, Sogdian, Arab-Muslim, Germanic, and other rulers also are reported to have bodyguard units that assured the safety of the leader and formed the core of his armed forces (Beckwith 2009, 15–6; La Vaissière 2007, 82–8). Personal troops were a normal compliment of Eurasian patrimonialism.

Qaghans expanded military and political power by attracting the support of leaders of subordinate tribes and tribal unions. For example, Gele Qaghan (r. 747–759) of the Uighur had a court of sixty men that included two ministers (*buyruqs*) and many chiefs who led varying numbers of warrior clients (Katayama 1999, 172). Military support was particularly crucial because Turko-Mongol society lacked predetermined lines of succession to the throne (Fletcher 1979–80, 241). In theory, a Turko-Mongol elite had the right to determine who would inherit his rank, and usually the eldest son was the favored choice (Barfield 1993, 147). However, among the rulers of the First and Second Türk empires more than half the time (eight cases), succession proceeded from elder to younger brother. Father-son and uncle-nephew successions occurred three times each (Drompp 1991, 95). A recently deceased qaghan's wishes often were ignored in favor of tanistry in which, "the most talented male member of the royal clan should inherit the throne, commonly by murder and war" (Fletcher 1979–80, 239). In some cases peaceful consensus was achieved among the leading candidates and tribal leaders, but when negotiations failed, the ensuing bloody conflicts ranged from assassinations to large-scale warfare. In order to ascend to the pinnacle of power, Turko-Mongol qaghans typically required a core group of dedicated clients and an expanding network of freshly recruited adherents

capable of intimidating or defeating rivals (Golden 1982, 50; Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 336–7). Success in this turbulent political game demanded that the patron exude personal charisma based on bravery, physical vigor, mental acuity, and elite status. In addition, the mother's status and personal qualities sometimes seem to have played a role, perhaps because the multiple widows of a ruler might compete with each other to promote their own sons. For example, Bodhisattva Irkin (Pusa *sijin*) succeeded his father in 627 as leader of the Uighur. The tribespeople were attracted to him allegedly because he was brave, good at strategizing, fond of hunting, and led the charge in battle. In addition, his mother reportedly contributed to his popularity because she had a strict and impartial nature suited to fair decision making (JTS 195:5195; XTS 217a:6111).

Once in power, the leader had to be constantly vigilant of challengers who might arise from his lineage. One case from the First Türk Empire is instructive. After the Türk dynastic founder Ashina Bumïn's death, rule passed laterally by consensus among three of his sons. However, after the death of the third son, Taspar (Tuobo) Qaghan (r. 572–81), a succession struggle broke out among Bumïn's grandsons. One son of each of the three previous qaghans vied for power, apparently at a *quriltai* (tribal council to determine succession). Taspar had designated his son, Anluo, as heir. However, a cousin, Ishbara Qaghan (r. 581–7), was proclaimed, allegedly because he was tall, brave, and the noblest of the sons of the previous qaghans. Anluo apparently persisted in claiming to be the legitimate successor reigning as Umna Qaghan, though the Chinese sources say he was a secondary qaghan. The Western Türks, who supported the third claimant, refused to recognize Ishbara or Anluo, irrevocably splitting the empire in half. With Sui Dynasty aid, Ishbara began to attack the Western Türks, but proved unable to reunite the empire.<sup>5</sup> Despite Ishbara's personal charisma, he was not able to overcome the jealousy of his cousins and their supporters. The end result of these disputes was a substantial weakening of Türk power. The uncertainty of succession meant that Türk leaders had to seek support of clients and be constantly vigilant against internal threats.

Personal charisma and military acumen helped to gain the loyalty of adherents, but retaining their allegiance required constant attention to generosity. In 627, Illig Qaghan sent gifts of silk brocade robes and livestock to his client, the borderland warlord, Yuan Junzhang, in northern Shanxi (JTS 55:2255; XTS 92:3805). The Uighur Gele Qaghan received wedding gifts when he married a Tang princess in 758 and distributed *all* of the silks, multicolored textiles, and garments to his retainers, chiefs, and others (JTS 145:5201; Mackerras 1973, 64). In the early seventh century, the Türk Ashina She'er was serving as *shad*, charged with supervising the non-Türk tribes of Mongolia. Reputedly, "the chiefs revered and loved him" because he declined to tax his subjects and as a result lived a modest lifestyle for a man of such high rank. He explained himself by saying "when the tribes have plenty, I am fulfilled" (JTS 109:3288–90; XTS 110:4114–6; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 174–8). Through his patrimonial style of generosity, She'er created loyal clients among the ranks of

subordinate chiefs. More broadly, chiefs portrayed themselves as generous to all of their subjects. The eighth-century Türk monarch, Bilgä Qaghan, used a public Turkic inscription to promote himself as a provider for his people. “In order to nourish the people, I, with great armies, went on campaign twelve times . . . I furnished the naked people with clothes and I made the poor people rich” (Tekin 1968, 268). In a patrimonial manner Bilgä Qaghan depicts his realm as a household where he feeds and clothes his subjects, as a father would provide for his children, so they might prosper.

Clients varied in the degree of their attachment to patron chiefs. Illig, the last independent qaghan of the First Türk Empire, suffered from tribal revolts, which contributed to the fall of his khanate and capture by the Tang (chapter 9). Only a few of his clients remained loyal to the end, but their examples demonstrate that the patron-client relationship sometimes invoked a strong emotional bond. When Illig died at the Tang capital of Chang’an in 634, two of his most loyal clients were overcome by grief and killed themselves. One was Hulu Tarqan Tuyuhun Xie, who had served Illig’s mother, raised Illig from birth, and must have been a member of his personal retinue. The other was a Illig’s uncle, Ashina Sunishi, who was the only tribal chief that remained loyal to Illig to the bitter end. Sunishi only surrendered to the Tang after Illig had submitted (JTS 194a:5160; XTS 215a:6036; ZZTJ 193:6105). Obviously, most of Illig’s original followers were not so closely attached to him, but the examples of Hulu Tarqan and Sunishi demonstrate that the potential existed to cultivate extremely close and durable emotional bonds between patrons and clients.

## B. North China Rebels

Rebellions that occurred in North China during the seventh and eighth centuries reveal that in times of civil war the tendency was for local leaders to form patron-client relationships in a manner that parallels Inner Asia. The civil war of the Sui-Tang transition lasted from approximately 617 to 628, as the Tang gradually consolidated power and eliminated rival rebels. Later, the An Lushan rebellion, persisting from 755–763, in the middle of the Tang Dynasty, involved an uprising of the Tang’s northeastern garrison armies that permanently weakened the central government. Rebels can provide valuable information on Tang local history because they are some of the few members of provincial society whom the Confucian historians wrote about in any detail. During periods of civil disorder, the natural tendency in localities was to turn everyday social networking, expressed in an informal patron-client idiom, into a nascent form of political organization. Whether rebels in North China came from elite or humble backgrounds, they resemble Inner Asian chiefs in building political and military power on a foundation of personalistic patron-client bonds.

Modern historians have given most attention to local martial elites (*haojie*) as war leaders in periods of disorder from the later Eastern Han Dynasty to the founding of

the Sui Dynasty. Tang Zhangru (1990, 122–3) lays emphasis on local elites as paternalistic power holders who defended their home territories during times of civil disorder. Describing North China from the fourth through sixth centuries, he notes that village government and defenses typically fell under the command of the patriarch of the leading local lineage. His followers were kinsmen and household clients (*binke*) who farmed and defended the territory when necessary. Other historians point out that some local martial elites took a more aggressive stance than depicted in Tang Zhangru's model, exploiting opportunities presented by the chaos to extend their power (Ch'ü 1972, 130–3). For example, the multiethnic frontier garrisons of the Northern Wei Dynasty were incubators that produced local Särbi and Han elites who would revolt and later found the Northern Zhou and Northern Qi dynasties (Pearce 1987, 68–217, 1994). Personal wealth was a key necessity for aggressive military power because of the expense of equipment required for contemporary heavy cavalry warfare, such as armor, long swords, and horses (Pearce 1987, 87–8). In this light we can view pre-Sui local society in North China as having a tendency toward classic Weberian patrimonial rule in which a powerful patriarch extends his authority beyond his kin by incorporating unrelated clients into his household. Särbi, Han, and other ethnicities shared in this custom (Pearce 1987, 83–108, 403–17, 1994, 490–95). This was a potential threat to imperial power, as Zhou Wudi (r. 560–578) lamented, “in recent times there is one malady: [when men] for a time have attached [themselves to a powerful man] then they do him honor as if he were their lord, and they were his subject” (ZS 12:190; Pearce 1987, 415).

These local social, political, and military phenomena of the Northern Dynasties become evident in Sui and Tang China during periods of civil disorder. An example of a local martial elite practicing defensive warfare in the seventh century comes from the biography of the famous Tang general, Su Dingfang, from south central Hebei. During the disorder at the end of the Sui Empire, his father led a local protective force of several thousand to fight off bandits. Su began his military career by following his father into battle at the age of fifteen. After the father was killed in fighting, the son became the head of the local forces (JTS 83:2777; XTS 111:4136–7). The father and son seem to fit the mold of local martial elites that mobilize an army of clients to protect their territory.

The borderland warlords of the Sui-Tang transition represent cases of local strongmen who aggressively mobilized their client networks to aggrandize power. Liu Wuzhou (d. 620), who led a revolt in northern Shaanxi as the Sui Dynasty was collapsing in 617, was a local elite with larger ambitions. His biography provides perhaps the fullest description of the use of local patronage to create a personal military force. Liu was a native of northern Hedong who used his position as a popular member of his community's martial elite (*haoxia*) to build up a following that assassinated the Sui prefect, Wang Rengong, an outsider appointed by the central government. Liu openly launched his campaign to undermine Wang by demonstrating charismatic leadership ability, giving a public talk denouncing the prefect



for not opening the granary in a time of hunger. Thereupon, Liu withdrew to his home, feigning illness to give other local elites a pretext to pay him a visit without arousing suspicion that a plot was afoot. Significantly, Liu served a banquet, slaughtering an ox and providing wine, thus symbolically asserting his dominance as patron. He took the opportunity to challenge the assembled men to follow him in opening the granary for the people. The Chinese histories describe him as forming a cabal (*dang*) that included over ten “disciples” (*tu*) who appear to be functionally equivalent to informal clients. At a banquet that ostensibly was meant to bring peace between Liu and Wang, one of Liu’s followers ambushed the prefect from behind, beheaded him, and displayed the head to the locals. After this show of force nobody dared oppose Liu, but he was astute enough to realize that coercion alone could not guarantee popular support, so he honored his promise to open the granary. When he sent a summons to arms to the surrounding communities, he gained a following of ten thousand men. Liu then demonstrated his willingness to become the client of a more powerful ruler in order to bolster his military strength when he “submitted” to the Türks. Like many borderland inhabitants, he was open to political networking with people of different ethnicities (JTS 55:2253–4; XTS 86:3711–3; ZZTJ 183:5718–9; THY 66:1145; TMCX, 646; des Rotours 1974, 887–9).

The life of another borderland warlord, Gao Kaidao (d. 624), demonstrates that, contrary to Tang Zhangru’s model of local martial elites as patrimonial power holders during times of civil disorder, Han Chinese from humble backgrounds also could form client networks. Gao was from Cangzhou on the coast of Hebei, south of modern Tianjin. He was a commoner and probably illiterate, as his biography states that he was a salt boiler in his youth. At the end of the Sui Empire he joined a local rebel who led ten thousand soldiers based in “Bean Saltmarsh.” After his leader’s death in battle, Gao took command of one hundred survivors. By 618 he had built his forces to the point where he had ten thousand soldiers. Like nomadic rulers, he had a personal guard (*qinbing*) of several hundred men, called the “Foster Sons” (*yi’er* or *yizi*), who were so close to him that he treated them like his own children (JTS 54:2228, 55:2256–7; XTS 85:3690, 86:3714–5; ZZTJ 188:5892). Like Liu, Gao gave his allegiance to the Türks. He also raided Tang territory in collaboration with the Qay. Gao’s subordinate generals also had their own personal adherents. Gao’s “beloved” client general, Zhang Jinshu, was able to stage a successful coup in 624, because his “disciples” surreptitiously had disarmed Gao’s Foster Sons (JTS 55:2257; XTS 86:3714–5; ZZTJ 190:5970, 5977; Skaff 2004, 127–8). Here, the key role of personalistic patron-client relations among warlords is evident. Building the rebel army required a warlord, like Gao, to gain and retain the fealty of client lieutenants, like Zhang. When Gao’s fortunes began to fail, Zhang’s personal following gave him the means to betray his erstwhile master.

More than one hundred and thirty years later, a participant in the An Lushan rebellion, Tian Chengsi (705–779), demonstrated similar political inclinations. He was a local martial elite from northeastern Hebei whose grandfather and father had

served as Tang officers in the frontier garrison of their native place. Tian became a client of An Lushan before the rebellion, serving as an officer in the vanguard and winning merit on campaigns against the Qay and Khitan. When the rebellion broke out in late 755, Tian captured part of the eastern plain and remained as regional governor in Henan. After the deaths of An Lushan in 757 and An's successor Shi Siming in early 763, he continued to enforce his regional power with a personal army of one hundred thousand men drafted from his territory. Most significantly, he chose ten thousand of the biggest and strongest men to serve as a personal guard (*ziwei*) called the Headquarters Troops (*yabing*) (JTS 141:3837–8; XTS 210:5923; des Rotours 1962, 225). As a military officer who exploited his position to build a personal following, Tian resembles rebels of earlier centuries because he developed a network of personally loyal client troops and sought out more powerful patrons.

## II. Sui-Tang Patron-Client Networks

The Sui-Tang military and bureaucracy may have had a rational organization, but the multiethnic contingents of men who filled positions were products of their upbringings. Just as in the cases of Turko-Mongols in Inner Asia and Han rebels in North China, Sui-Tang civil officials and military officers were naturally inclined to organize themselves into informal patron-client networks at the local and empire-wide levels. Patrons differed in the types of clients they attracted. Some patrons were more exclusive—particularly literati Confucians—whose clients tended to include only like-minded and ethnically Han officials. Other patrons tended to be more inclusive—especially pragmatic officials and military officers—incorporating people of diverse ethnicity and social status into their political networks.

### A. Civil Officials

Civil officials are the only component of Tang society or government whose patron-client networks have received previous scholarly attention. The scholarship treats officials in isolation, neglecting to place Tang bureaucratic behavior within the larger context of the empire or Eastern Eurasia. A general treatment of bureaucratic patron-client networks is beyond the scope of this book, but this section will investigate one case study of factional conflict at Xuanzong's court in the early eighth century in order to better contextualize political networking among bureaucrats.

Tang procedures for selecting and promoting government officials perpetuated patronage networks. Two methods were used to determine eligibility to serve in government. Hereditary privilege (*yin*) was open to one son and grandson of each ranked civil and military official, while civil service exams provided another stream of entry. Although the latter method nominally was intended to eliminate favoritism, candidates still needed patrons to nominate them to take the examinations. By the



late Tang, candidates unashamedly sought the patronage of civil service examiners. After passing the exam, the newly minted client-officials gave allegiance to the patron-examiner at an unofficial ceremony of gratitude (Moore 1999). Since exam success or hereditary privilege only determined eligibility for office, the impetus toward patronage was reinforced by the need for recommendations to obtain appointments in government (Herbert 1988, 20–4, 127–2; Mair 1978, 1984, 91–135; Pulleyblank 1955, 47). In either case, there was fierce competition for official posts because of a glut of men entitled to serve. One Tang author estimated that eight or nine men competed for each opening (Bol 1992, 41–4; Herbert 1988, 65–90). Even after obtaining a coveted position, the client still needed a patron to gain promotions, despite administrative regulations stipulating that professional advancement should be based on seniority and performance evaluations (Herbert 1988, 52–6). Patronage even opened up a third method of entering government. As will be demonstrated below, some talented men from humble backgrounds, lacking hereditary privilege or the opportunity to pass an exam, received appointments and promotions from patrons in the military and bureaucracy. Under these circumstances personal connections, especially to powerful patrons, became a necessary ingredient to professional advancement.

Patronage in the appointment and promotion process encouraged factional conflicts at the Tang court. To provide a case study, one well-known conflict at the early eighth-century court will be investigated. On one side were the representatives of eminent northwestern lineages, Yuwen Rong (d. ca. 730) and Li Linfu (d. 752), and on the other were the literati Confucians, Zhang Yue (667–730) and Zhang Jiuling (678–740). Their early eighth-century factional conflict at the court typically has been depicted as a dispute between “aristocrats” of the northwest who used hereditary privilege to gain office and newly risen “literati” or “literary gentry” of the south and east who had obtained positions via success at civil service exams (Pulleyblank 1955, 47–60; Twitchett 1979a, 382–411). Although their antagonism also involved ideological disagreements over administrative and frontier policy, what has been overlooked is the extent that these issues were intertwined with a struggle over power and patronage. The leaders of both factions engaged in efforts to win the favor of the emperor, place supporters in bureaucratic positions, and purge their opponents. Each faction had a distinctive patronage style, which provides clues about the roles that culture and ideology might play in building patronage networks in the Tang bureaucracy.

In the case of patron-client ties among the literati Confucians, Zhang Jiuling’s rise in officialdom initially depended on his relationship with his patron Zhang Yue. Zhang Jiuling belonged to a locally prominent lineage from Shaozhou, Lingnan in the south. His family placed emphasis on Confucian education, rather than martial skills, to bolster the status of male clansmen. He also was trained to cultivate patrons. At age twelve he presented a rare book to a visiting provincial official who was known to be an avid book collector (Herbert 1988, 130). Although Zhang Jiuling

passed the prestigious *jinshi* exam in 702, he was unable to secure an office, probably because his lineage lacked connections in the capital. Zhang Jiuling's path to upward mobility was established in 703 after meeting Zhang Yue and becoming his client. Zhang Yue, who passed a civil service examination in 689, had a reputation for promoting the careers of literati Confucians (*wenru*) "to raise the political ethos" and denigrating "those officials who lacked learning and literary talent," in other words, men who entered officialdom via hereditary privilege (JTS 97:3057; Bol 1992, 45). Even though the two Zhangs came from different parts of the empire, they shared the experience of belonging to local elite families that lacked influence in the capital, a love of literature, and a mutual claim of descent from a Jin Dynasty statesman. Zhang Yue's recommendation allowed Zhang Jiuling to take a decree exam, which in turn led to a position in the Imperial Library. Thereafter, Zhang Jiuling's bureaucratic posts depended on the support of his patron. When Zhang Yue lost imperial favor from 713 to 718, Zhang Jiuling became vulnerable at court and took sick leave from 716 to 718. After Zhang Yue's rehabilitation in 718, Zhang Jiuling once again received an appointment, but when Zhang Yue lost a power struggle to Yuwen Rong in 726, Zhang Jiuling returned to provincial posts until 731. During this period in the provinces, his patron Zhang Yue died in 730 and Yuwen Rong fell from power in 731. When Zhang Jiuling returned to court in 731 as one of Xuanzong's personal secretaries, his connection to the most powerful patron, the emperor, had become the key to advancement. Zhang reached the pinnacle of power when he was named grand councilor in 734 (Herbert 1978, 15–23; Twitchett 1979a, 397–409).

The other grand councilor in 734, Li Linfu, was a distant relative of the imperial line and had entered officialdom through service in the imperial guard corps and the recommendation of Zhang Yue's rival, Yuwen Rong. Yuwen Rong and Li Linfu were members of high-status northwestern lineages. As pragmatic officials, known for their financial reforms, they found themselves in conflict with literati Confucians such as Zhang Yue (Twitchett 1979a, 382–93). An example of a person who rose within the Yuwen Rong-Li Linfu political network is Niu Xianke (675–742). Niu was a native of the Chang'an region, who was a brilliant administrator, but had begun his career as a relatively humble, unranked county clerk without much hope of promotion to even the lowest ranks of the regular officialdom. However, the local magistrate thought highly of him and became his patron. When the magistrate was transferred to Hexi, he brought Niu to serve under him. Thereafter, Niu's career began a spectacular rise due to his talents and ability to attract patrons. By 714 Niu had become a regular, ranked official, serving as an administrator who was considered to be a trusted subordinate (*fu**xin*) of Wang Junchuo (d. 727), commander of the Hexi Military Commission (Map 1.4). After Wang's death, the new Military Commissioner, Xiao Song (ca. 669–749), himself a client of Yuwen Rong, placed Niu in charge of all administrative matters. When Xiao Song went to the capital in 729 to serve as grand councilor while concurrently retaining his former frontier post, he recommended that Niu handle affairs in Hexi *in absentia*. In 732, probably

at the behest of Xiao Song, Niu finally received a regular appointment as Hexi Military Commissioner, representing an immediate promotion of six ranks from his former position as an Administrative Assistant! After Xiao Song was forced to retire in 733, the emperor appointed new grand councilors that included Zhang Yue's protégé, Zhang Jiuling, and Yuwen Rong's protégé, Li Linfu. With Xiao Song out of government, leadership of the Yuwen Rong faction fell to Li Linfu, who now cultivated Niu Xianke as a client. Eventually, Niu Xianke attained the most prestigious bureaucratic position, grand councilor, through the recommendation of Li Linfu (JTS 103:3195–7; XTS 133:4555; ZZTJ 213:6779–80, 6799; 214:6827–8; Twitchett 1979a, 393–9, 407–9). Niu undoubtedly was an extremely talented person, but his meteoric rise in officialdom from county clerk to grand councilor would never have been possible without patrons who probably appreciated him for his loyalty and skills as an administrator.

The men participating in the patron-client networks of literati Confucians and pragmatic northwesterners belonged to two separate subcultures existing within the bureaucracy and empire. Yuwen Rong and Li Linfu were willing to promote the careers of local elites like Niu Xianke, and tended to view the literati Confucians as impractical idealists. For example, Li Linfu once denigrated Zhang Jiuling as a “bookworm who does not understand the big picture” (ZZTJ 214:6822). The northwesterners also appear to have been more willing to take on clients of different ethnicities. For example, Li Linfu became the patron of the Turko-Sogdian frontier general An Lushan (des Rotours 1962, 34). The style of the patron-client reciprocity also appears to be more cosmopolitan. One winter when Li Linfu was at his height of power, he met with An Lushan to discuss governmental affairs. During their conversation, Li took off his robe and used it to cover An Lushan. Contemporaries considered this to be an extremely important sign of Li's favor toward this particular client (des Rotours 1962, 48). Leaders bestowing their personal garments to demonstrate esteem was a common custom in Inner Asia (Allsen 1997, 48–9). The patron's act of solicitude toward the client was representative of a cosmopolitan patrimonial style.

On the other hand, the two Zhangs represented the literati Confucian tradition. Patrons tended to bond with clients who were like-minded Confucians, which in practice excluded military officers, pragmatic officials, eunuchs, and Turko-Mongols. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, Zhang Jiuling scorned the talented Niu Xianke for his lack of erudition in classical studies. Patronage also had a much different style, taking on refined airs. The literary men seeking positions competed to send sycophantic essays and poems to potential patrons. Even office seekers formed client networks euphemistically referred to as “tents” (*peng*) with one of their members serving as patron or “tent boss” (*pengtou*) (Mair 1978, 35–7). Despite the exclusivity of their networks and refined etiquette, literati Confucian patron-client relationships resembled others in Eastern Eurasia in terms of the hierarchical-dyadic form, reciprocal exchange, and political function. In the final analysis, it is

crucial to distinguish between the cultural styles of these civil officials and the reasons for political partisanship. Cultural or ideological affinities could play a role in the recruitment of clients into particular factional blocs, but the primary purpose of a faction was to advance the governmental careers and personal interests of participants, not to advocate for regional or class concerns.

## B. Military Officers

The political networks of military officers have some similarities and differences in comparison to their civilian counterparts, and will receive more detailed attention because of their importance in the affairs of the China-Inner Asia borderlands. Frontier officers most resemble civil officials in the way patrons cultivated bonds with clients by offering appointment and advancement in the ranks. One important difference is that high-ranking frontier officers were the only Tang officials legally allowed to have retainers on the imperial payroll, who effectively functioned as formal clients. In terms of the style of the relationship, literary refinement was lacking. Most officers would have been more at home in the patronage networks of North China warlords, Turko-Mongol chiefs, or pragmatic civil officials, where interethnic relationships and demonstrations of generosity and solicitude were more prominent. Given this fact, it is not surprising that pragmatic civil officials and military officers often cultivated each other as patrons and clients.

Tang administrative statutes mention that high officers in expeditionary armies and frontier garrisons were permitted to have an official entourage consisting of two types of clients. These were called retainers (*qianren*) and aides-de-camp (*biezou*), both of which had the vague duties of “accompanying” or “rendering service” to an officer (TLD 5:23a–24a; JTS 43:1835; ZZTJ 214:6827; Ning 1999, 59). The numbers of these formal clients varied according to position and rank. The largest numbers mentioned are those for commanders of army garrisons who were allowed twenty-five retainers and ten aides-de-camp. The general-in-chief of an expeditionary army was allowed sixteen retainers and eight aides-de-camp. The statutes explicitly banned other groups from obtaining these types of clients, including civil officials, ordinary guardsmen, frontier commoners, and troops who would have been stationed at the capital in the guard corps (TLD 5:23a–24a; JTS 43:1835; ZZTJ 211:6719, 214:6827). The regulations are frustratingly taciturn, but create the impression that official entourages generally were frowned upon, but perhaps were deemed necessary in the rough and tumble world of frontier warfare where a commander needed trusted aids to protect him and carry out his orders quickly and effectively.

Scattered surviving evidence concerning retainers and aides-de-camp can clarify their roles as clients. The best example of an officer who was an aide-de-camp is Wang Junchuo, who served under Guo Zhiyun (668–722), a Longyou Military Commissioner-in-Chief (Map 1.4; JTS 103:3191, 196a:5229; XTS 133:4547;

ZZTJ 209:6802, 211:6706). Wang had much in common with his patron, Guo. They shared the same native place, Guazhou in the Hexi borderlands, and had strong reputations for their bravery, generalship, and skill at mounted archery. It is easy to see what attracted Guo to take Wang as his protégé. Wang's career trajectory after his appointment as Guo's aide-de-camp is unknown, but when Guo Zhiyun died early in 722, Wang succeeded his mentor as Hexi-Longyou Military Commissioner. The close personal relationship Wang formed with Guo while serving as his aide-de-camp probably facilitated his rise in the ranks.

Retainers are somewhat better attested than aides-de-camp in extant historical documentation. One example of a man who began his career as a retainer is Feng Changqing (d. 756), a Han Chinese commoner who had accompanied his maternal grandfather in exile to the northwestern frontier in the eighth century. Feng was intelligent and had the benefit of an excellent classical education received from his grandfather. Around 740 Feng sought to join the retinue of Gao Xianzhi (d. 756), a high-ranking officer of Koguryan descent, serving in the Anxi "Pacified West" Protectorate in the Tarim Basin of modern Xinjiang (Map 2.1). Every time Gao went out, approximately thirty retainers wearing bright clothing accompanied him. In this case the retainers apparently served as a personal bodyguard whose appearance is meant to accentuate the prestige of the military officer. Feng does not seem to have fit the mold of a retainer because he had a frail physique and a short, lame leg. Feng handed over a letter in person requesting to join Gao's retinue, but Gao refused because of Feng's infirmity. Nonetheless, Feng was persistent, staying at Gao's gate from morning to night for more than a month until Gao relented and accepted his service.

Feng's relationship to Gao can clarify some aspects of clientage in the frontier armies. One is the interethnic nature of political networking, with the Han Chinese not necessarily in the role of patron. In this case, the Koguryan, Gao, was willing to accept the ethnically Han, Feng, as a client. Also, as a retainer, Feng appears to have been more than a bodyguard. After Gao led two thousand cavalry to defeat a tribe in battle in 741, Feng was chosen to write the formal announcement of victory. Feng's highly refined writing style seems to have been regarded as unusual for a retainer. The military commission's administrative assistants, who were regular, ranked civil officials handling the bureaucratic paperwork for the army, sought to meet Feng because they were impressed that a member of Gao's entourage excelled as a writer (JTS 104:3207; XTS 135:4579–80; ZZTJ 216:6887–8). This anecdote suggests that retainers might perform ad hoc duties to assist their master. Nonetheless, Feng's literary ability and physical frailty were unusual. A robust physique and martial skill seem to have been the primary qualifications for retainers, who most probably served to physically protect and perform miscellaneous duties for their superior.

Feng's status as Gao's retainer also facilitated the deepening of patron-client bonds. Feng experienced a rapid rise in the frontier army, which seems to be a result of Gao's patronage and Feng's innate talents. At some time after 741, Feng received

an appointment as a regular military officer. This was followed by three promotions in rank over the next several years. There is direct evidence that Gao's hand was behind the promotions. When Gao was appointed commander in early 748, he sent a memorial to court successfully requesting that Feng be named his administrative assistant. This placed Feng in charge of all finances, storehouses, weapons, and state and military farms. When Gao was away at battle, Feng acted *in absentia* as Military Commissioner (JTS 104:3208; XTS 135:4580). The promotions over a span of about eight years represented a meteoric rise in rank from retainer to the second-most powerful person in the military commission. Obviously, Feng was talented, but such rapid advance would not have been possible without the recommendations of his patron.

Another case where men of different ethnicities engaged in a patron-client relationship involves the Hexi, Longyou Military Commissioner, Wang Zhongsi (705–749), and his subordinate, Geshu Han (d. 757). Wang apparently was a Han Chinese whose father, Wang Haibin, had served in the bodyguard of the emperor Xuanzong (JTS 8:174, 103:3197; XTS 133:4551; ZZTJ 211:6705–6). Geshu Han's father and grandfather were Türgish chieftains who were officers in the Tang armies, and his mother was a Khotanese princess. Wang Zhongsi arranged for Geshu to be promoted successively to positions as staff general (*yajiang* or *yaya*) and then vice-commissioner, where Geshu gained renown for repulsing Tibetan raids (JTS 104:3212; XTS 135:4569; ZZTJ 215:6877–9).<sup>6</sup> In 747 Wang was recalled to court to be punished because of his opposition to an attack on Tibet. Geshu also was ordered to travel to the capital so the emperor could evaluate him as a prospective replacement for Wang. Officers in Hexi and Longyou, who apparently also were Wang's loyal clients, encouraged Geshu to help their master by bribing influential officials, but allegedly Geshu refused this suggestion. At an audience the emperor announced that Geshu would be promoted to military commissioner. Geshu took the opportunity to try to save his former patron, Wang, speaking impassionedly with sobs and tears. The emperor was moved and pardoned Wang, but still demoted him to serve as a civil prefect in the south (JTS 104:3212; XTS 135:4569–70; ZZTJ 215:6877–9). The anecdote demonstrates that even though Geshu and Wang had different ethnicities, they formed a patron-client bond so strong that Geshu still felt a debt of gratitude to Wang after he had found a new patron, the emperor.

Another rich anecdote, involving Gao Xianzhi, can serve to further clarify the role of patronage in promotions, potentially fickle loyalties of clients, and ethnicity in networking. In 747 Gao was a military officer serving under the Anxi Military Commissioner, Fumeng Lingcha. After Gao led an army to victory in an important battle against Tibet, he sent the announcement of victory directly to court, bypassing his erstwhile commander, Fumeng Lingcha. This infuriated Fumeng, who berated Gao upon his return, cursing him as a “dog intestine eating Koguryan slave” and a “dog shit eating Koguryan slave” and mentioning four promotions that Fumeng secured on behalf of Gao. He closed by saying “How could



you not rely on me to submit the announcement of victory? Since the Koguryan slave [Gao] committed this crime, he should die, but because he recently attained great merit [in battle], I will not carry out this sentence” (JTS 104:3205; XTS 135:4576). Gao had double-crossed his master in an attempt to gain the direct patronage of the emperor, and must have felt somewhat guilty because on this occasion he rather meekly gave Fumeng credit for the past promotions. Gao’s opportunistic disloyalty stands in contrast to Geshu Han’s deeper allegiance to Wang Zhongsi. The anecdote also clarifies the role of ethnicity among frontier military officers. Fumeng’s background and identity are unclear, but his dialogue with Gao Xianzhi demonstrates that he recognized ethnic differences and harbored prejudices.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, Fumeng’s bigotry did not preclude him from becoming Gao Xianzhi’s patron. Fumeng’s bias only was expressed when he became angry at Gao’s duplicity. This hints that ethnic differences may have been preserved in the private sphere of the household, but did not necessarily impede political networking in the public sphere of military service.

A final anecdote from slightly later in time explains why Gao Xianzhi may have harbored resentment toward Fumeng, and also how the clients might contend with each other for the favor of the patron. Gao’s gambit to double-cross Fumeng paid off when he sent the announcement of victory directly to the emperor. The emperor recognized Gao’s martial talents and appointed him to replace Fumeng as the military commissioner of Anxi. Gao then was able to even the score with some fellow officers who previously had slandered him. One was the Grand General, Bisi Chen, who had served in Fumeng’s headquarters as a staff officer. Gao obliquely threatened Bisi by saying “Do you remember my 1,000 *shi* [1,750 bushels of grain] estate to the east of the city that you took from me?” Bisi replied that Fumeng had given it to him for his “hard work.” Gao’s response was full of sarcasm, “I had feared that you got it through personal influence, but [evidently] you were given it out of pity. I had not wanted to mention it [previously] because I feared that you would harbor resentment. Now that we have talked, I know it is a trivial matter” (JTS 104:3205; XTS 135:4578; ZZTJ 216:6887). Here we can see how the former patron, Fumeng, had used resources of an official estate to reward one client, Bisi, at the expense of another one, Gao. Adherents might engage in vicious competition with each other for the favor of the patron. Clients felt personal solidarity to the master, but not necessarily toward each other.

Military patrons rewarded subordinate clients with more than appointments, promotions, and perks of office. There are frequent references to the generosity of military commanders who use private resources to compensate their clients. For example, Heichi Changzhi (d. 689), who originally was from Paekche on the Korean peninsula, used cavalry effectively to defend the Tang northern frontier against Türk attacks in the 670s and 680s. He was popular with his troops because of his generosity. Whenever Heichi received rewards for meritorious service, he distributed them to his officers and troops (JTS 109:3294–5; ZZTJ 201:6337, 204:6445).

Patrimonial generosity appears to have been a widely admired value in Eastern Eurasia that could help to assure the loyalty of clients and more generally the troops.

The negative side of the generosity of commanders was that it could give rise to corruption. Fumeng Lingcha's transfer of an estate from Gao Xianzhi to Bisi Chen is an example of using public resources to reward and punish clients. In another case, a personnel evaluation commissioner reported in 741 that the Hexi-Longyou Military Commissioner, Ge Jiayun employed "favorites" who openly broke the law and falsely claimed merit (JTS 88:2874; XTS 116:4234). Nonetheless, Ge retained his frontier command. The emperor's attitude toward corruption involving clients comes across in a decree of 734 addressed to Wang Husi, the Anxi Military Commissioner. The emperor accuses Wang of falsely inflating the rewards due to his troops. He also states what should be obvious: the purpose of rewards is to encourage meritorious service, but that it is easy to cheat. Rather than punishing Wang, the decree merely admonishes him to be truthful in his future reports (QJJ 8:9b; QTW 284:16a–b). Apparently Xuanzong recognized the problem in both cases, but seemed to consider it business as usual, needing to be controlled rather than stopped completely.

The personal guard corps was another type of clientage, common among Turko-Mongols and North China warlords, that appears among Tang military men. As mentioned previously, the retainers of high-ranking officers appear to have some attributes of personal guardsmen on the public payroll. However, any attempt to create a personal bodyguard larger than a few dozen retainers would have been regarded as illicit and a sign of potential rebellion. For example, when the Han Chinese general and grand councilor, Zhang Liang (d. 646), was accused of harboring five hundred foster sons (*jiazi*), Taizong apparently assumed that they were a personal bodyguard and immediately ordered Zhang's execution for plotting rebellion (JTS 69:2516; XTS 61:1635, 94:3829; ZZTJ 198:6235–6; Mao 2001, 52). Another example of a large personal bodyguard is the infamous general, An Lushan, who rebelled and nearly brought down the dynasty. An's guard corps included over one hundred household servants who had attained special expertise in archery and eight thousand troops of Tongra, Qay, and Khitan ethnicity whom he called the *yeluohe*. This was a Chinese transliteration of a foreign word that the medieval commentators claimed meant "professional soldiers" or "brave warriors."<sup>8</sup> An Lushan was said to have treated these clients as foster sons worthy of special favor and generosity. In return they gave him complete loyalty, which combined with their martial expertise made "each worth one hundred men" (des Rotours 1962, 102–3; ZZTJ 216:6905–6; XTS 217b:6141, 225a:6414). Here we can see generosity being used to build a military clientage. Confucian historians exposed the existence of Zhang and An's personal guard corps in order to provide evidence of their intent to rebel, but the practice may have been more widespread. As mentioned previously, Gao Xianzhi, while still a mid-ranking officer, had thirty retainers, which exceeded the maximum of twenty-five for the most senior commanders.



### III. Imperial Patrimonialism

Sui and Tang emperors were products of their environment. Like others who obtained any modicum of power in China and Inner Asia, they used patrimonial political techniques to create bonds of trust between themselves and their subordinates. Sui and Tang emperors consciously believed that they were patrimonial rulers, likening the empire to their household and inhabitants to family members. The Confucian political tradition generally encouraged rulers to think of themselves as the parent of the people (Gan 2003, 227–36). Wechsler (1985, 234) argues that Tang rulers conceived themselves more expansively as parents presiding over a “political family . . . symbolically embracing wider groups of the populace in an extended dynastic family.” Tang Taizong made a remark in 644 that directly supports Wechsler’s observation. The context was the emperor’s decision to accept the Türks as subjects living in the Ordos region despite objections that they would be located uncomfortably close to the capital of Chang’an. Taizong said:

Barbarians (*yidi*) also are people. Their natures are not different than those of China (*Zhongxia*). A monarch worries about whether his benevolent charity (*deze*) extends [to barbarians] and does not need to be suspicious because they are of a different kind. If benevolent charity spreads, then the four barbarians can be turned into *one family*. If there is much suspicion, then those of the same flesh and bones cannot avoid being enemies (ZZTJ 197:6215–6; Pan 1997, 182).

Three aspects of this speech are worthy of note. One, the empire is referred to as a family, which is identical to the patrimonial conception of a realm. Two, a cosmopolitan perspective is stressed, justifying the inclusion of people of different ethnicities in the family. Three, the way to win people’s loyalty is via benevolent charity (*deze*). Wen Yanbo reportedly used the same phrase in suggesting how to deal with the newly submitted Türks (chapter 2). Although the term *deze* is derived from Confucian ethical concepts of interpersonal relations, more broadly it also can be construed as a guide to behavior in a patron-client relationship in which benevolent charity is interpreted as generous rewards delivered with solicitude. Below we will provide evidence that Taizong and other Tang emperors interpreted benevolent charity in this manner.

#### A. Client Networks in Consolidation of Imperial Power

As in the case of civil officials and military officers, Sui and Tang emperors in the first half of the dynasty had to develop skills at creating client networks in order to be effective rulers. Even though the Confucian tradition included the notion that the

emperor's eldest son, preferably born of the primary consort, should be the legitimate successor, it was never a legal requirement and did not become ideological orthodoxy until after the Tang (Wechsler 1985, 14–5). Consequently, Sui and Tang succession in the first half of the dynasty was characterized by struggles for power among imperial family members that often involved murder. Some scholars have noted that Tang succession resembles the norm in Inner Asian societies (Chen 2001; Eisenberg 1994; Chen 1996b), but analogous patterns of coups and succession struggles also regularly occurred during the preceding Northern *and* Southern Dynasties (Chittick 2010; Eisenberg 2008; Wright 1978, 58–61). From the founding of the Sui Dynasty via palace coup in 581, through 756, the only designated heirs who succeeded their fathers normally were Sui Yangdi (r. 604–17) and Tang Gaozong (r. 649–83); however, neither heir was the eldest son, and factional disputes preceded their elevations to heir apparent status (Wright 1978, 59–63; Xiong 2006, 22–8; Chen 1996b, 388–93; Eisenberg 2008, 167–211).<sup>9</sup> Succession disputes and conflicts were typical elements of patrimonial politics that appear as far west as medieval Europe (Althoff 2004, 10–13, 107–8).

The first half of the Tang period includes two blatant usurpations of power that have garnered the most attention. One was the future Taizong's assassination of his brother, the heir apparent, and Empress Wu's abolishment of the Tang to found the Zhou Dynasty (690–705), with herself as ruler. Taizong and Empress Wu were adept at building networks of clients who assisted their rise to power. Taizong (Li Shimin) was aided by twelve "trusted subordinates" when he ambushed his brother in 626. Two months later Gaozu relinquished the throne to his son, Taizong. To consolidate his authority, over the next several years Taizong replaced Gaozu's loyalists in the military and bureaucracy with his own adherents (JTS 2:29, 68:2504; XTS 90:3773; Eisenberg 1994, 238–51; Wechsler 1979b, 182–87, 1974, 67–78). Empress Wu rose from Gaozong's concubine to empress in part because of her mastery of the politics of the harem. Later, she was able to carry out bloodless coups to seize power successively from her sons, Zhongzong and Ruizong, because she had built a network of supporters in the bureaucracy. In 690 the officialdom and military were filled with her clients, who aided the unprecedented founding of her Zhou Dynasty with a female ruler (Guisso 1978, 17–25, 51–106; Rothschild 2008b, 23–36). With a sufficiently strong network of clients, the unthinkable—a female emperor—became reality.

Xuanzong also built up a following of clients as a prelude to usurping rule in the politically confusing years after Empress Wu was deposed in 705. His case will be described in detail here because it is a less well-known example of creating a power base of clients. In 705 Zhongzong regained the throne from his mother, the elderly Empress Wu, by participating in a coup that was primarily instigated by his wife, Empress Wei (d. 710), and daughter, the Anle Princess (d. 710) (Guisso 1979, 320–1). Xuanzong, who was Zhongzong's nephew, potentially had a claim to the throne because his father, Ruizong, also previously had reigned as emperor. In 709

Xuanzong left his princely establishment in the provinces to go to the capital, Chang'an, to work in earnest at building up a base of clients. His key ally in the extended family became his aunt, the Taiping Princess (d. 713), who was Empress Wu's daughter. Not surprisingly, he had two personal bodyguards who were slaves with expertise in mounted archery, Wang Maozhong (d. 731), and Li Shoude. The slaves accompanied Xuanzong, flanking him with bows and arrows clasped under their arms. They would later be participants in the coups and counter-coups that Xuanzong carried out in his rise to power. In the capital Xuanzong worked at gaining the allegiance of one of the northern guard units, the Myriad Cavaliers. Since the imperial palace was located on the northern side of the capital, guards in this sector were a "key" to victory in power struggles in the first half of the dynasty (Chen 2001, 237–45). He banqueted them liberally with fine food and drink, and distributed valuable gifts. Xuanzong's slave, Wang Maozhong, reportedly knew his master's intentions and treated the cavaliers with solicitude. Xuanzong, a member of the imperial family, and Wang Maozhong, the son of an enslaved nobleman from Koguryō, implicitly understood the rules of the political game they were playing (JTS 106:3252; XTS 121:4335; ZZTJ 209:6643–4). Still, it was an expensive undertaking and Xuanzong may have obtained the money from his aunt and co-conspirator, the Taiping Princess (Guisso 1979, 326).

When Zhongzong died in 710, Xuanzong's rivals, Empress Wei and the Anle Princess, placed an infant on the throne in an attempt to monopolize power. At this point Xuanzong launched a coup against the women and their clients in the bureaucracy and palace guards. Xuanzong personally participated, accompanied by his bodyguards, trusted subordinates, and the Myriad Cavaliers. The plotters murdered Empress Wei, the Anle Princess, and their "cabal" of clients in the government. Ruizong was restored to the throne and Xuanzong became heir apparent (ZZTJ 209:6644–9; Guisso 1979, 326–7; Levy 1958, 102–4). Nonetheless, the coup did not bring political stability to the court. The Taiping Princess dominated her brother, Ruizong, and vied for power with Xuanzong. The princess initially seemed to have the advantage because Ruizong appointed her clients to key positions in the bureaucracy, but Xuanzong gained the upper hand in 713 when Ruizong abdicated in favor of him. A few days later, Xuanzong once again mobilized his "trusted subordinates" and client guardsmen to make a preemptive strike against the Taiping Princess and her "cabal" of clients. The Taiping Princess was forced to commit suicide, and most of her children and supporters in the bureaucracy were summarily executed (ZZTJ 210:6683–4; Chen 2001, 242–6; Levy 1958, 106–8; Twitchett 1979a, 343–5; Wang 1999, 53–70). Obviously, the struggle for power through the cultivation of clients in key positions brought Xuanzong to the throne, using political sensibilities similar to those we have seen among his great-grandfather (Taizong), grandmother (Empress Wu), Turko-Mongol rulers, North China rebels, and Tang frontier commanders!

## B. Patrimonial Benevolence and Generosity

Once on the throne, Sui-Tang emperors continued to use patrimonial techniques of rulership to complement their legal-bureaucratic powers. With the vast resources of the empire pouring into the state treasury and privy purse, they were the wealthiest patrons in all of Eurasia. Sui-Tang emperors not only remunerated high officials and officers according to administrative regulations, but also bestowed ad hoc rewards to demonstrate generosity and benevolence. The implicit or perhaps unconscious goal was to create a bond of personal allegiance between imperial master and client. Even more broadly, Tang rulers would customarily “manifest compassion” toward the entire population at times of ritual significance, such as accession ceremonies or the adoption of new reign era names, by granting amnesties and remitting taxes. These customary gifts were announced with grand flourishes of ritual pomp that highlighted imperial wealth and generosity (Wechsler 1985, 90–105; Rothschild 2006, 134–5). The rulers’ portrayal of themselves as benefactors of all subjects was meant to secure general support for their regimes, and parallels the previously mentioned practices of Turkic qaghans. Nonetheless, a ruler’s relationships with important clients were far more crucial than those with the general public. Sui-Tang imperial benevolence—mainly toward frontier generals, including those of Inner Asian origin—will be examined below.

Generals who were wounded in the line of duty received solicitous attention from emperors. In 645, when Taizong personally led troops in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Koguryō and a Turkic general, Qibi Heli (d. 677), suffered a wound at the waist, Taizong personally tended to the gash (JTS 109:3293; XTS 110:4119). Even more dramatically, an arrow hit another Turkic general, Ashina Simo, and Taizong personally sucked out “poisoned blood” (JTS 194a:5164; XTS 215a:6040). More than half a century later in 698, Zhang Renyuan, a Han Chinese general, was wounded while repelling a Türk attack. Empress Wu was not on the scene, but sent a personal messenger to deliver medication (JTS 93:2981; XTS 111:4152; ZZTJ 206:6533).

The children of fallen generals also were recipients of imperial benevolence. After one of Sui Wendi’s earliest supporters fell in battle, his son was adopted into the imperial lineage as a grandnephew of the emperor and renamed Yang Yichen “Virtuous Official” (SS 63:1499; Dien 1977, 142, n. 10). Similarly, Emperor Xuanzong showered attention on the previously mentioned Wang Zhongsi after his father, Wang Haibin, was killed in battle against the Tibetans in 714. Wang Haibin had an especially close relationship with Xuanzong, dating from his days as her apparent, because Wang had served as one of his bodyguards. After Wang’s death Xuanzong took his nine-year-old son into the palace, where he was raised alongside the imperial princes. Xuanzong changed the boy’s given name from Xun to Zhongsi, meaning “Loyal Descendant,” but left his surname unchanged (JTS 8:174, 103:3197; XTS 133:4551; ZZTJ 211:6705–6). Later, Daizong raised the daughter

of the Turkic general, Pugu Huai'en, in the imperial palace. Even though Pugu had been accused of treason and killed in 765, the emperor reportedly wished to show respect for Pugu's previous service (ZZTJ 224:7208; Mackerras 1973, 85, n. 129; Peterson 1970–1). In all of these cases, the emperors cared for children of generals who had lost their lives, a form of "life insurance" which in turn might encourage other high-ranking military clients to risk their lives.

Personal gifts were another way of expressing appreciation toward military men who had distinguished themselves in service to the throne. These rewards might be one of the emperor's actual possessions or be purchased with funds from the palace treasury, making them patrimonial gifts falling outside of legally stipulated emoluments. In 626 Taizong sent a Han Chinese general a West Asian bottle that the emperor had used himself, and a copy of *Annals of the Han* (*Hanji*) (JTS 62:2386–90; XTS 99:3910–2). In 668 Emperor Gaozong finally succeeded in conquering Koguryō with the assistance of a former member of the Koguryan elite who had become a Tang general. In appreciation for his service, Gaozong sent the general a gold bowl and a personally written imperial decree expressing the emperor's gratitude (XTS 110:4123–4; Rothschild 2008a). In the 730s another Han Chinese general Wang Husi was entrusted with twenty red and twenty purple robes to give as he saw fit to soldiers who especially distinguished themselves in battle (QJJ 10:10b; QTW 286:3b). In this case the imperial largesse served to bolster the prestige of Wang as a patron to his own officers. Finally, in 750 the Turko-Sogdian general, An Lushan, offered captives to the court and was lavishly rewarded with numerous expensive gifts, including silks and precious objects made from gold, silver, and other materials (des Rotours 1962, 52–8). The purpose of the gifts was to increase bonds of loyalty to the throne, but the case of An Lushan, who later would rebel, proves that patrimonial largess was not always sufficient to guarantee fidelity.

Emperors also entertained their military commanders with food and music. Gaozong arranged a martial music performance for nine commanders of various ethnicities in 655 (JTS 28:1047). References to banquets are more frequent. Empress Wu threw a banquet in 700 in honor of two Khitan generals who had led armies to victory over their fellow tribesmen (JTS 89:2893; XTS 115:4213; ZZTJ 206:6547). Emperors also might give a share of the culinary spoils to women. For example, the military commissioner Wang Junchuo and his wife were rewarded with gold, silks, and a banquet to recompense their meritorious service in repelling a Tibetan attack in 727 (JTS 103:3191, 196a:5229; XTS 133:4547; ZZTJ 212:6747). On another occasion Xuanzong ordered his client, the chief eunuch Gao Lishi, to hold a banquet to resolve a feud between Xuanzong's favored generals An Lushan and Geshu Han. The patrimonial nature of this gathering is demonstrated by the emperor's hope that the two men would develop a better relationship so they would treat each other like "brothers." Unfortunately, the patron's attempt to bring peace between his symbolic sons only exacerbated their differences. The two men got into a heated argument and

their rivalry deepened, a typical negative byproduct of personalistic politics (JTS 104:3213; XTS 135:4571; ZZTJ 216:6916; des Rotours 1962, 117–21).

One of the most prestigious rewards that early Tang emperors offered civil officials, generals, and members of the imperial family was an “accompanying burial” in the vicinity of the imperial tomb. These satellite tombs represented ad hoc displays of favor not bound by the legally mandated standards for graves of officials, which rigidly stipulated the amount of land, height of tomb, number of grave goods, length of epitaph, and other characteristics according to rank (Niida 1933, 806–41). Instead, variations in size, design, and materials of the satellite burials reflected the hierarchy of imperial favor (Eckfeld 2005, 50–9). Particularly honored officials might have tombs larger than blood relatives of the emperor. Accompanying tombs, like other patrimonial rewards, served a political purpose because, as Howard Wechsler points out “[s]uch favors could be pointed to with pride by family members and serve to bind them more closely to the regime” (Wechsler 1985, 143). Wechsler takes this as evidence that the Tang rulers sought to create a “political family.”

Cen Zhongmian’s analysis of Taizong’s tomb complex called Zhaoling, which also included many officials who served Gaozong, surpasses Wechsler in emphasizing that military officers, including those of Turkic background, played a prominent role. Military men received 64 of the 167 satellite burials (38.6 percent), which is a plurality. Almost a quarter of the officers were of clear foreign origins (THY 21:412–4; Cen 1958, 137–41; Ecsedy 1988, 10–1).<sup>10</sup> The previously mentioned Türk general, Ashina Simo, who died from his wounds in battle against Koguryō, received posthumous rewards of a tomb at Zhaoling and a memorial stele (JTS 194a:5165; XTS 215a:6040; THY 21:414). Also buried at Zhaoling were five of Simo’s clansmen—including Ashina She’er and Ashina Zhong—and the Tiele chief, Qibi Heli. Ashina She’er and Qibi Heli were particularly devoted to Taizong, and after the emperor died in 649 they requested to commit suicide to accompany their lord in death, but the newly enthroned emperor Gaozong denied their entreaties (JTS 109:3289, 3293; XTS 110:4114; ZZTJ 199:6269; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 175). Suicide of close followers after the death of a master apparently was a Turko-Mongol custom because, as will be mentioned, two close clients followed Illig Qaghan to the grave, and the practice existed among the Khitan (Wittfogel and Feng 1949, 258). Instead of Ashina She’er and Qibi Heli killing themselves, they received accompanying tombs at Zhaoling after dying naturally (JTS 109:3289, 3294; XTS 110:4114; ZZTJ 199:6264–5; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 175). Ashina Zhong’s tomb has been excavated, but was almost empty because of looting. One of the few objects remaining is the epitaph written by a famed literary master whose panegyric used a florid style, densely packed with classical allusions, which would have lent prestige to the deceased (TMC 601–3; Shaanxisheng 1977). All of these generals began their careers as Turko-Mongol elites on the steppe, later became important members of the Tang military, and won important victories mainly in Inner Asia. They gave their



allegiances to their patrons, Taizong and Gaozong, and their ultimate rewards were accompanying burials. The “political family,” like the Tang patrimonial realm, was militaristic and multiethnic.

#### IV. Horizontal Alliances

Aside from patron-client bonding, political networking involving alliances between relative equals also occurred in Eastern Eurasia. Horizontal ties only will be mentioned briefly below because they seem to play a secondary role in political networking involved in state building and diplomacy.

Relatively tight horizontal alliances in Inner Asia commonly were expressed in the idiom of the brotherhood. Among the Turko-Mongol peoples, men became sworn brothers by sealing their union with a blood oath (Golden 1998, 192). In Tang China sworn brotherhoods appeared in interethnic alliances. One example is the union of Ji Wen, the Vice Director of the Ministry of Revenue, who belonged to an eminent lineage from Luoyang, with An Lushan. The Confucian historians depicted Ji as an opportunist who sought an alliance with An, a favored imperial client. The two men swore to be brothers, and Ji promised to submit memorials nominating An to be grand councilor (des Rotours 1962, 98–9, 153–9; JTS 186b:4854; XTS 209:5915; ZZTJ 216:6904–5). Their scheme did not work and Ji was killed at the outset of An’s rebellion. Although the literati Confucian historians imply that the union was illicit and especially distasteful because it involved a Tang civil official and “barbarian” general, members of the Tang imperial lineage were willing to engage in this type of relationship. For example, during the heavy Türk raiding of the early Tang, the prince Li Shimin, the future emperor Taizong, and the Türk Tuli Qaghan became blood brothers and “sealed a covenant (*meng*) promising to help each other when in distress” (JTS 194a:5156; XTS 215a:6031; ZZTJ 191:5992). Even though both were generals leading mutually hostile armies, they potentially had motives to create the personal alliance. The former probably sought to diminish Türk raiding, while the latter may have been seeking insurance that he had a place of asylum in case of a conflict with his uncle, Illig Qaghan, the Türk monarch. More than 130 years later during the An Lushan rebellion, Suzong ordered his heir apparent, the future Daizong, to form a blood brotherhood with Yabghu, the eldest son and designated successor of the Uighur qaghan (JTS 195:5198; XTS 217a:6115; Mackerras 1973, 56–7). It appears that during times of domestic weakness, sons of Tang emperors readily formed blood brotherhoods with elite Turkic peers.

Alliances that were more casual and transitory than sworn brotherhoods also existed. The ethnically non-Chinese generals, Pugu Huai’en and Li Baoyu, exchanged gifts of silk and other valuables when their armies met in Hebei province. Later, Li turned against Pugu, probably out of jealousy, disingenuously accusing him of

attempting “to create personal ties for ulterior ends” (Peterson 1970–1, 439–40; Wang 1999, 100–12). Even more loosely ramifying horizontal political relations are revealed in the career of the civil official Gao Shang. Gao was a poor commoner from northern Hebei who was intelligent and had a knack for cultivating powerful patrons. In 742 a local prefect in Hebei, Li Jiwu, a distant member of the imperial family, offered to appoint Gao to a position in local government. Gao declined because he had higher ambitions, but convinced Li to send him to the capital with thirty thousand in cash and a letter of introduction to the eunuch general, Wu Huaibao! Gao entered officialdom in 742 after passing a civil service exam and gaining Wu’s recommendation. Later, Wu introduced him to the powerful eunuch, Gao Lishi, who arranged for Gao Shang to become his household client (*menxia*) to tutor his adoptive son. Later, Gao Lishi recommended Gao Shang to his ally at the time, An Lushan, who was seeking a talented civil official to manage the affairs of the Pinglu Army back in Hebei. Gao Shang became the “trusted subordinate” of An Lushan, and eventually encouraged An to rebel (des Rotours 1962, 105, 174–80; JTS 200a:5374–6; XTS 225a:6424–5; ZZTJ 216:6905–6). Although the histories depict Gao Shang as an opportunist, his example demonstrates the importance of connections in Tang government and how clients could shift from one patron to another. The exchange of talented clients between patrons could help to cement temporary alliances. The example also demonstrates that ethnicity, social status, and civil-military distinctions often did not seem to form a barrier to horizontal alliances or vertical patron-client relations. Gao Shang was a low-status commoner who was passed from an imperial relative to two eunuchs in succession, and finally to a Turko-Sogdian general. The literati Confucian historians imply that Gao’s cavorting with eunuchs and “barbarians” who were in cahoots with each other is proof of his bad character, but among civil officials perhaps Gao was more of the norm than exception.

Overall, alliances appear to be less well-documented in the sources than patron-client bonds, perhaps because they were more fleeting and had less political importance. For example, the Confucian historians zealously presented An Lushan as having a political network of alliances on the eve of the rebellion, but of the twenty officials and generals mentioned, only Ji Wen fits the definition of an active ally. The others mentioned were clearly subordinate clients (des Rotours 1962, 104–7; ZZTJ 216:6903–5). An’s earlier alliance with Gao Lishi seemed to have ended. Howard Wechsler’s study (1973, 117–20) of early Tang factionalism at court notes that alliances tended to be transitory because they shifted around different personalities and issues. Allies were drawn together by personal affinity and shared political goals, but could be pulled apart as relationships soured or political objectives changed. Since alliances were extra-legal, the parties involved normally could not enforce an agreement to work together. Perhaps relationships sanctified with blood oaths had greater permanence, but the evidence is insufficient to determine this. Although patron-client relationships also suffered from these problems endemic to informal



and personal politics, patrons had a degree of coercive power over their subordinate clients that made it more difficult to forsake a patron than an ally. Moreover, the shared values of military men justified and encouraged patron-client relations, a topic which will be explored in the next section.

## V. Loyalty Ideals of Military Men

Customary Eastern Eurasian loyalty ideals of military patron-client relations had sufficient legitimacy in the Tang Empire to be incorporated into the dynasty's eight canonical categories of loyalty. Although some of the imperially-sanctioned loyalty ideals reflect the influence of orthodox Confucianism, such as being "incorrupt and upright, just and impartial," others were appropriate for military patron-client relationships, such as recognizing a retainer who braved danger to serve or benefit his lord (THY 79:1461; Standen 2007, 43–53). What is crucial to emphasize is that official Tang ideals reflected the social composition of the empire. Men of a variety of backgrounds could display loyalty to the throne and state using values that were readily recognizable to them. A case study below will demonstrate that Turko-Mongol military men might put these ideals into practice while serving Tang emperors.

### A. Taizong and Qibi Heli: An Exemplary Dyad

The life of Qibi Heli, who led the Turkic Qibi tribe that had submitted to the Tang in Hexi in 632, exemplifies the loyalty ideals of military patron-client relationships. Heli went to the capital, and served as a general in the imperial guard corps. During this period of service, he also led troops, which probably were Qibi tribal contingents, on campaigns in 635 and 640. While Heli served the Tang, his mother and brother remained in Hexi to handle the tribe's affairs (JTS 109:3291–2; XTS 110:4117–8; ZZTJ 194:6180, 6099). A crisis occurred in 642 when the Qibi chiefs decided to migrate to Mongolia to submit to the newly powerful Sir-Yantuo Khanate. Heli went to Hexi to try to convince his tribe to retain loyalty to Tang Taizong. Heli described Taizong as an emperor who was worthy of their allegiance because he had been benevolent and generous, and appointed Heli to important positions. The chiefs did not deny Heli's assertions, but claimed it was too late to change plans because his mother and brother had already departed for Mongolia. Heli replied that his brother had gone because he was filial to his kin, but Heli refused to go because he was loyal to his monarch (*zhongjun*) (JTS 109:3292; XTS 110:4118; ZZTJ 194:6180).<sup>11</sup> In other words, Heli implies that loyalty to a benevolent patron ideally should supersede family allegiances.

The chiefs forced Heli to go to Mongolia, but he refused to accept the Sir-Yantuo monarch, Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan, as his new master. Impolitely sitting before Zhenzhu Bilgä with his legs sprawled out, Heli dramatically made an oath to be a Tang hero and

not submit to the qaghan. To show his sincerity, he allegedly cut off his ear. As an exemplary client, Heli was willing to accept only one patron and his loyalty extended to death. The patron, Taizong, also is said to have shown extreme faith in Heli. At the Tang court, various ministers expressed doubts about Heli's intentions. Some thought Heli was homesick, saying "A person's heart yearns for its native place." Other commentators presumed that ethnic solidarity was stronger than the patron-client bond, saying that foreigners "have a similar nature and care for each other" and "Heli going to the Yantuo is like a fish drawn toward water." Taizong disagreed with both assertions, saying "Not true! Heli's heart is as solid as iron. He will not turn his back on me." Evidently, Taizong presumed that the bond between himself and his client was stronger than any other loyalty (JTS 109:3292; XTS 110:4118; ZZTJ 194:6180). Later, Taizong demonstrated that he placed state affairs on par with his relationship to Heli when he agreed to give an imperial relative as a bride to Zhenzhu Bilgä in exchange for the release of Heli.

Elements of these stories about Qibi Heli may have been exaggerated to suit the purposes of various parties.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of historical truth, we can regard the relationship between emperor and general as an ideal. Taizong, the patron, treated his client Heli benevolently and generously, and in return Heli regarded loyalty to the patron to be more important than attachments to life, native place, kin, tribe, or ethnic group. Some additional evidence demonstrates that Heli really subscribed to these principles. As mentioned previously, he requested to commit suicide to join Taizong in the grave. An alternate tradition concerning his missing ear claims that he cut it off to demonstrate grief at Taizong's death (TMC 2:1374). In addition, there is an anecdote about his participation in a Tang battle against Koguryō. Tang troops captured a man who had wounded Heli. Instead of killing the man, Heli unexpectedly ordered his release, saying "This man served his master (*zhu*) by braving naked blades in order to wound me. He is a hero. Dogs and horses repay their masters, should not men even more?" (JTS 109:3293; XTS 110:4119). This anecdote implies that Heli believed that the bonds of loyalty between patron and client were personal and reciprocal. Those who persevered in the relationship to the point of risking death were worthy of honor and respect. These values harmonized perfectly with the officially sanctioned Tang loyalty ideals honoring retainers who braved danger in order to serve their monarch. Qibi Heli's life demonstrates that some Tang canonical norms of allegiance were widely held Eastern Eurasian values that provided a basis for cross-cultural accommodation.

Even if the bond between Taizong and Qibi Heli was "solid as iron," men did not always live up to this customary ideal. There have been many cases of weak and fluid patron-client affiliations discussed earlier in this chapter. The absence of legally stipulated norms left room for the relationship to be renegotiated or renounced. Circumstances under which patrons and clients might dissolve bonds will be discussed in chapter 9.

## Conclusion

Patron-client relationships, and to a lesser extent alliances, provide a means of understanding cross-cultural integration within the Sui-Tang empires and Inner Asia. Despite differences in ethnicity and governmental institutions among the peoples of Eastern Eurasia, values regarding informal sociopolitical networking were widely shared. Patron-client relationships appear to have been the most prevalent form of bonding, perhaps because patrons had certain degrees of power over clients, giving vertical bonds more permanence than horizontal ones. Higher status patrons would take on lower status clients who expected rewards in exchange for loyal service. If we analyze these vertical bonds in terms of four criteria—1) functions of clients, 2) nature of reciprocal exchange, 3) social style of the relationship, and 4) ethnicity of patrons and clients—the parallels are most striking between Turko-Mongol chiefs and North China warlords. In both cases the clients functioned as retainers, bodyguards, and sub-commanders who were mainly obliged to render military service and give advice to their war leaders. In return the patron chief or warlord provided financial rewards, food, and clothing. Some modern historians have tried to draw a distinction between Turko-Mongol “tribal” and North Chinese political networking, apparently assuming that tribes are static entities united in kinship (Tanigawa 1982, 49–50). However, in both cases power would accrue to charismatic military leaders who could attract large followings of client-soldiers and eliminate rivals vying for power. Moreover, the existence of cosmopolitan patron-client networks indicates that many living in Inner Asia and North China willingly interacted with each other. The key difference between a Turko-Mongol chief and a North China warlord was that the former’s adherents mainly were pastoral nomads capable of traveling perpetually with their households, while the latter’s followers were men who temporarily gained mobility by uprooting themselves from their villages and families.

During periods of unity and expansion, the Sui-Tang empires incorporated North China and neighboring parts of Inner Asia, so it is not surprising that many men from these regions brought their social and political practices into governmental service. Tang frontier military officers closely resemble Turko-Mongol chiefs and North China warlords in the functional duties of their clients, who served as retainers, bodyguards, and sub-commanders. Given the social background of officers on the northern frontier, who mainly had roots in North China and Inner Asia, it is not remarkable that interethnic networking was common, and displays of patrimonial generosity in terms of gifts of food, clothing, and valuables retained importance as symbols of the personal bonds between patrons and clients. However, the most lucrative rewards Tang officers offered clients, salaries associated with appointments to office and promotions in rank, differed from the less regularized and regulated payments that could be expected on the steppe or in China during times of civil war. Although the loyalty ideals of martial clients encouraged them to brave danger to serve a benevolent master, proponents of loyalty to death were relatively

rare and mostly appear to have been Turko-Mongols, such as Ashina Sunishi and Qibi Heli, who had exceptionally strong relationships with their patrons.

Tang civil officials resembled military officers in offering appointments, promotions, and symbolic gifts to their clients, but can be divided into at least two types based on social style. Pragmatic officials, more often from the northwest, who cultivated civil and martial skills, were similar to Tang military officers in favoring symbolic gift-giving and cosmopolitan strategies to attract men of various ethnicities as clients. On the other hand, literati Confucians, more often from the south and east, formed a distinctive subculture. Although these Confucians were more likely to hold moral qualms about factionalism, they still wholeheartedly formed patron-client networks. Official appointments and promotions were the prizes sought by clients. The style of symbolic exchanges took on a literary vein with the trading of poems and essays. The high degree of literacy required to participate in the Confucian subculture limited its patron-client networks mainly to elite families who had the resources and motivation to give their sons years of training in the classical texts. The literati Confucians, who wrote and compiled governmental and historical records, used their discursive power to paint themselves as the norm. Ironically, from the perspective of most people of Eastern Eurasia, Confucians formed an elitist subculture that less readily engaged in personal relationships with people from other backgrounds.

The informal patron-client relationships that permeated the Tang military and civil bureaucracy had an ugly side that caught the attention of literati Confucian historians, who decried politics that valued personal connections more than idealistic ideological norms and impersonal legal standards. At the worst, patron-client politics induced factional struggles for wealth and power, promoted careers of undeserving clients, and encouraged clients to vie with each other in vicious competitions for the favor of their patron. Given the informal nature of clientage, loyalties between masters and servants could be fickle. An opportunistic client might betray his patron by currying favor with another powerful person.

Despite the unseemly and illicit airs surrounding patron-client relationships, in the Sui-Tang empires they endured as a tacitly condoned custom due to cultural, structural, and utilitarian factors. Culturally, the peoples of Eastern Eurasia were predisposed to accept status differences within society and the necessity of personal reciprocity between superiors and inferiors. Shared expectations of patron-client bonds helped to integrate men of various ethnicities into Sui-Tang service, especially in the military. Structurally, a shortage of positions relative to qualified candidates intensified the need for office seekers to give allegiance to powerful patrons. Finally, from the utilitarian perspective, a loyal and talented client was preferable to a merely efficient underling. A client, feeling personal allegiance to a patron, might be expected to work harder and keep the master's interests in mind.

At the apex of the hierarchy of client networks were the Sui and Tang emperors. Effective rulership involved not only mastery of the science of administrative routines and regulations, but also the patrimonial art of winning men's hearts. These

skills were honed in sometimes bloody political battles inside the palace. The authors of medieval works, such as the *Old Tang history* and *New Tang history*, typically made value judgments about the followers of imperial family members involved in power struggles. They claim that winners, like Xuanzong, were supported by “trusted subordinates” (*fuxin*), while losers, like Empress Wei, were assisted by cabals (*dang*) of opportunistic sycophants. Their sanctimonious language obfuscated the fact that both were vying for power with the assistance of clients whom they won over with their personal charisma and generosity. Once on the throne, effective emperors showered brave officers and efficient bureaucrats with gifts that went beyond officially stipulated rewards for service. The unstated goal was to win people’s hearts with “benevolent charity” to supplement the rewards and sanctions of the legal-bureaucratic system.

Patrimonialism may have been a uniform element of Eurasian culture, but it offered the utilitarian advantage of extending a Sui-Tang emperor’s power to spaces within a large multiethnic empire that were beyond the reach of bureaucratic control. Some of these spaces were within the minds of men serving in the military and bureaucracy. During the Tang, not all officials, especially military officers, had a Confucian education that might encourage idealistic principles of loyalty to the dynastic state. Other spaces—where personalistic politics gained particular importance—were frontier territories, unsuited to agriculture, where Turko-Mongol leaders were culturally predisposed to becoming “outer” clients of a monarch. This aspect of patrimonialism will be examined in later chapters of the book. The next chapter will investigate additional areas of cultural entanglement between China and Inner Asia that played a role in diplomacy.

## Ideology and Interstate Competition

Modern concepts of “country,” “diplomacy,” and “foreign policy,” are ill-suited to describe interstate relations in medieval Eurasia. In a premodern world of borderlands rather than borders, which lacked codified international law, state sovereignty gradually diminished with distance from the political center. As a consequence, there was no clear demarcation between domestic and foreign affairs. The distinctions between independent polities and domains of vassals, or between allies and enemies, were blurry and shifting. This was especially true in the China-Inner Asia borderlands, where Turko-Mongol pastoral nomads had higher degrees of mobility and autonomy than settled farmers. In this dynamic and almost organic political environment, empires expanded and contracted, while smaller tribes disappeared into larger polities, reemerged again, and transferred to new locations. One consequence of the fluidity of polities and political relationships was the continual circulation of people back and forth across the borderlands, which in turn reinforced mutual knowledge and reciprocal influence.

This chapter compares Eastern Eurasian conceptions of imperial space and rulership that guided monarchs as they attempted to exert and justify sovereignty. Sui-Tang Confucian and Turkic belief systems shared a number of significant elements conventionally considered to be “Chinese.” Like most people throughout Eurasia, Sui, Tang and Turkic elites conceived of imperial states as having peripheral zones of diminishing control that should be ruled indirectly through subordinate vassals whose status often was legitimized in investiture. In addition, Sui-Tang Confucian and Turkic ideologies of sacral kingship included common foundational beliefs in the supernatural powers of ancestors and Heaven to aid and protect rulers. The comingling of these ideas of religion and kingship appears to be the legacy of millennia of entangled relations in Eastern Eurasia.

By the sixth century, the common repertoire of beliefs played a role in facilitating interstate relations across Eastern Eurasia. The period from about 580 to 750 witnessed relatively intense ideological competition and syncretism. The most famous innovation in legitimacy ideals during this time span was Tang Taizong’s proclaiming himself the “Heavenly Qaghan” (*tian kehan*), which conventionally is

cited as the first explicit assertion of bicultural “simultaneous kingship” over China and Inner Asia.<sup>1</sup> Taizong’s claim to be Heavenly Qaghan dominated historical memory and became the earliest model for later dynasts of Inner Asian background (Crossley 1992), but Taizong’s fame as an innovator is greatly exaggerated. This chapter will place the Heavenly Qaghan title in historical context that has been lacking to date by demonstrating that the Sui-Tang and Turkic rulers of the sixth through eighth centuries shared a willingness to engage in ideological syncretism and innovation that can be traced to internal and external competition for power.

## I. Eurasian Imperial Space

### A. Turkic Peripheries

Turkic peoples conceived of sociopolitical organization, described in chapter 1, as having a single qaghan at the apex who held the *el* or khanate to rule over tribal unions and their composite tribes and clans. Subordinate clients were invested as vassals with various indigenous titles. For example, in a Turkic inscription of 733, Bilgä Qaghan of the Türks said of Bars Beg of the Kirghiz, “It was we who had given him the title of [subordinate] qaghan” (Tekin 1968, 266).<sup>2</sup> The same inscription portrays Bilgä Qaghan as a provider to Türk subjects but a vanquisher of other tribes:

Having succeeded to the throne, I gathered all the poor and destitute people together . . . O Turkish lords and people hear this! How you should live and dominate (other) tribes, I have recorded here; and how you would (otherwise) perish by being unfaithful (to your qaghan), this, too, I have recorded here (Tekin 1968, 262–3).

Tribespeople who are loyal to their qaghan will prosper and “dominate” others on the periphery, while the “unfaithful” will “perish.”

Outer clients, whom the Türks dominated on the peripheries of their states, were conceived differently depending on the terms of submission. Those who had voluntarily surrendered and thereafter remitted their tribute might be referred to in patrimonial kinship terms. For example, when the Särbi rulers of the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties were paying tribute to Taspar Qaghan, the Türk ruler is reputed to have said, “So long as my two sons to the south remain filial, why should I worry that I may lack anything?” (ZS 50:911; SS 84:1864–7; Drompp 2005a, 104; Golden 1992, 131–2). More frequent references can be found to “slaves” whom the Türks forcibly dominated, indicating that they were vassals expected to render tribute.<sup>3</sup> For example, after the Western Türks had defeated the Alans and Onogurs, the western qaghan told a visiting Byzantine ambassador, “they are our subjects and



are numbered among our *slaves*" (Blockley 1985, 175–7). Two centuries later, Uighur qaghans used the same terminology (Moriyasu 1999, 183, 185). Rulers of city-states who had become clients of Turkic rulers are known to have referred to themselves as slaves. For example, the king of Samarqand, who had given his allegiance voluntarily to the Türgish qaghan Sulu and even joined the qaghan's bodyguard, referred to himself as Sulu's slave (Ṭabarī 2:1542; Blankinship 1989, 79; La Vaissière 2007, 72, 96). In at least one other part of Eurasia, Sasanian Iran, emperors also considered vassal rulers to be their slaves (Blockley 1985, 83–5; Chrysos 1976, 8–9).<sup>4</sup> The idea that outer clients were slaves of a ruler conveys the political ideal that rulers were all-powerful dominators of their subjects.

Nevertheless, Turkic khanates were full of tensions. In the words of Klyashtornyi (2004, 22), Turkic political philosophy was that "all peoples either surrender or rule over others and the relations among them are dominated by the struggle for preserving this rule or liberating themselves from it." Despite the bravado implied in designating outer tribes as slaves, a Turkic qaghan's control over the periphery of his khanate was relatively loose. Consequently, the line between foreign and domestic often was in a state of flux as outer clients made calculated decisions to submit to or revolt against the authority of a ruler.

### B. Sui-Tang Periphery

The Sui-Tang ideological conception of external relations had its origins in the "Chinese worldview" of the Confucian intellectual tradition, which had substantial, unacknowledged similarities with those of the Türks. In both cases ideology was forced to conform to the common challenges of rule on the periphery of empire. Just as a Turkic ruler's control over his subordinate tribes diminished with distance from the political center, Sui-Tang imperial hegemony gradually dissipated in the borderlands of the empire. As a result, ideology acknowledged that imperial subjects on the periphery should be treated as outer clients. The Sui considered outer clients to be vassals, while the Tang divided outer clients into two types: bridle district officials and vassals. In addition, external foes whom the Tang were unable to subjugate might have been considered equal adversaries, or more likely fell into a gray area of uncategorized competitors.

Bridle rule, as mentioned in chapter 2, involved foreigners who "submitted" and were organized, like regular subjects, into "bridle" counties, prefectures, and area commands. Indigenous elites became outer clients with hereditary appointments as Tang local government officials. Turko-Mongol bridle districts mainly were located on the outskirts of the borderland prefectures on the empire's northern frontier.

The other category of outer clients was one in which the Sui and Tang emperors formally invested native rulers as vassals with their indigenous titles of rule, such as qaghan or king. Vassals were outer clients who tended to be more powerful or distant than bridle subjects. After Taizong was proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan in 630, he



claimed the exclusive right to invest his vassals and their successors (THY 100:1796). The parties involved in these arrangements found them to be culturally acceptable. Turkic outer clients and pragmatic Tang elites readily accepted investiture because it was a customary Eurasian tradition. Sui-Tang Confucians also found justification in historical precedent. The practice of investiture had deep roots in Chinese culture, going back at least to the pre-imperial Western Zhou, which had a political system in which a king, ruling over a central domain, invested hereditary regional rulers with the right to govern their external territories (Creel 1970a, 317–87; Li 2008, 235–99). The Qin and Han dynasties replaced feudalism internally with a system of direct bureaucratic control, but investiture was retained in foreign relations (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 20, 259; Loewe 1986, 123–57). In Confucian theory, whether outer clients held the status of “vassal,” “bridle official,” or a combination of both, they belonged to the domain of domestic affairs. All sectors of the Sui-Tang and Turkic elite were in accord that this was an acceptable means of handling political affairs on the periphery of empire.

The Tang court’s approach to dealing with nearby great powers drew closer to the modern sense of foreign relations. Confucian theory recognized the category of “equal adversary” (*diguō*), in which the Tang treated the other polity with rites (*li*), recognizing it as a peer state. Since the Tang court was highly reluctant to acknowledge equality with other powers, the status of equal adversary only was applied formally to the First Türk Empire from 618 to 625 (XTS 215a:6032; ZZTJ 191:5996) and probably to Tibet from 781 to at least 841.<sup>5</sup> Both “equal adversaries” received this status in part because they represented strong militarily threats to the Tang. At other times Tibet and the Türks fell into a gray area outside of the official categories of classification. Bilgä Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire refused Tang investiture, as did Tibet, but neither could compel the Tang court to acknowledge them as equal adversaries. In these cases the *modus vivendi* became to couch the relationship in the idiom of fictive kinship. For example, Xuanzong and Bilgä Qaghan considered themselves father and son (JTS 194a:5175; XTS 215b:6053; ZZTJ 212:6744). In another type of case, Turko-Mongol rulers of great powers accepted investiture as Tang vassals, such as the Uighur qaghans after the An Lushan rebellion (Kaneko 1988, 86–7; Pan 1997, 296–315). In all cases of strong rivals of the Tang, the particular forms of the relationships—equal adversaries, fictive kin, or lord-vassal—were negotiated through diplomacy and military attacks or threats. These negotiations will be investigated in later chapters.

Turkic and Sui-Tang Confucian concepts of imperial space shared patrimonial elements relating to the gradual dissipation of power on the periphery. The zone of hegemonic external relations was unstable, so the distinctions between outer clients and adversaries often were ambiguous and subject to change. Turkic and Sui-Tang imperial formations were not unusual in this respect and had earlier parallels in the Han and Roman empires.<sup>6</sup> In all cases there was a customary, patrimonially-inspired assumption that external relations should be expressed in terms of hierarchical

patron-client bonds. The customary ideal was to negotiate the “proper places” of both parties in a patrimonial hierarchy. The concept of “proper place” is borrowed from John Dower’s study of twentieth-century Japanese imperialism (1986, 264–6). Japan’s idealized goal, which developed from concepts introduced during earlier contacts with China (Wang 2005, 136–8), was to put every country into its “proper place” in a hierarchical international structure with a patriarchal emperor at the apex. East Asian historians conventionally consider this to be a characteristic of Sinic cultures.<sup>7</sup> However, the values of “proper place” were shared more widely. The “Chinese worldview” had relevance in external relations only because its ideological forms substantially corresponded to customary expectations of outer clients in Eurasia.

## II. Eastern Eurasian Legitimacy

This section will compare Sui-Tang and Turkic ideologies legitimizing the political power of rulers and their dynastic lines. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the existence of bloody succession struggles within Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol ruling families meant that both sides downplayed the necessity of predetermined succession to justify rule. Other forms of legitimization were needed to cover up the bloody mess left in the wake of power struggles. One widely accepted means of justifying rule, patrimonial benevolence, was introduced previously. Other major ingredients of legitimacy in medieval Eastern Eurasia, sacral kingship and ancestor worship, will be discussed below.

### A. Sui-Tang Confucian Ideology

Confucian ideology, like that of most premodern societies, held that kingship had sacral and temporal dimensions. By the Sui, Confucian rituals and beliefs legitimizing imperial rule had been accreting successive layers since Shang times. Sui and Tang rulers, based on Han precedent, generally took dual regnal titles of “Son of Heaven” (*tianzi*), to reflect sacral duties as a unique conduit between the sacred realm of gods and profane world of men, and “August Emperor” (*huangdi*), usually rendered as “Emperor,” to designate temporal powers. The former title had origins during the Zhou Dynasty, while the latter was a Qin innovation meant to lift the status of emperor above mere kings (Wechsler 1985, 86–7; Creel 1970a, 2; Bodde 1986, 53). God of High Heaven (*haotian shangdi*), usually rendered as “Heaven,” was believed to be an all-encompassing deity that conferred universal rule over “All under Heaven.” For most of Chinese history this was the basis for the Son of Heaven’s claim to dominion over foreign peoples, while the regnal title of August Emperor represented jurisdiction over directly administered territory of the “Middle Kingdom” (Fairbank 1968; Wechsler 1985, x, 87). Heaven also was believed to control

major changes in political power on earth by bestowing a mandate (*tianming*) to rule. Emperors had a degree of free will to determine their fate because Heaven sent blessings or calamities depending on “quality of rule” on earth. However, by some contemporary interpretations, the predestined turn of fate also played an independent role in influencing the outcome. The rise and fall of dynasties thus “was a combination of men’s actions, Heaven’s will and fate” with the latter two being “decisive” (Wechsler 1985, 18–20, 110–22, 232–3; McMullen 1988, 132–5).

Since the fall of the Qin, new dynasties had come to power either through warfare or coup d’état. Conquest established a clear claim that a founding ruler had received Heaven’s mandate. Dynasties that began via palace coup, especially prevalent during the Northern and Southern dynasties, usually involved a powerful official usurping rule from a child emperor. The new dynasty gained a patina of legitimacy because the dethroned ruler was said to have “voluntarily” yielded power to a “virtuous” (*de*) successor (Wechsler 1985, 80–1). The emphasis on moral virtue reflects the classic Zhou conception of the Mandate of Heaven, which was transferred from morally bad to good rulers (Creel 1970a, 81–100). The Sui founding was of this type (Wright 1978, 59–64). The Tang represented a combination of both kinds of accession because the dynasty was formed through force of arms, but the transfer of power involved a puppet Sui child emperor who yielded rule to Tang Gaozu. The new emperor was able to claim dual merit as a virtuous Confucian and awe-inspiring conqueror (Wechsler 1985, 91–9). Gaozu’s reign era title of “Martial Virtue” (Wude, 618–26) encapsulated an ideal of combined military and Confucian values, and in retrospect served as a credo for successive Tang emperors, especially Taizong, Gaozong, and Xuanzong. The Tang imperial ideal glorified the emperor as an individual whose moral rectitude and terrestrial military accomplishments reflected the special approbation of the sacred realm, especially Heaven. Though the martial emphasis was a source of irritation to contemporary Confucian moralists, it was not unusual in early imperial China (Rothschild 2006, 147).

Like most premodern rulers, emperors carried out sacred rituals in which they were believed to pass through the metaphysical space and time of the spiritual realm. Ritual worship thus served to enhance the emperor’s aura as a person with preternatural abilities. The emperor’s most important sacrifices, carried out to Heaven at the southern suburban altar on the winter solstice, entailed burnt offerings of slaughtered animals, agricultural products, jade, and silk (Wechsler 1985, 107–22). As has frequently been noted, the sacral aspect of Confucian rulership theoretically endowed the emperor with limitless powers over earthly space. Although these ideological claims were chauvinistic and physically impossible to achieve, as Pamela Crossley (1999, 38) has remarked, universal assertions of sacred rulership were akin to those of “expansive religions, including branches of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, [which] . . . could be said to distinguish between a ‘world’ of the present in which their doctrines prevailed and an undelimited ‘universe’ of the future in which there were no competing truths.”

After Heaven, the second most important objects of Confucian ritual worship were the ancestors of the dynastic house. Elite veneration of ancestors can be traced back in Chinese history to the Shang Dynasty, and often is considered “central to the entire development of Chinese civilization” and identity (Ho 1998, 151; Schwartz 1985, 20–1). The descendants ritually worship ancestors and in return receive divine protection and guidance. The practice also served to reinforce the signature Confucian value of filial piety through the expression of continued reverence toward elders after their deaths (Yang 1957, 278). During the Shang Dynasty, ancestral worship was the most vital state ritual, involving burnt offerings of animals, millet ale, and sometimes humans, to patrilineal ancestors and their consorts in order to nourish them after death (Keightley 1999, 255–60; 2000, 97–103). By the Han Dynasty, worship of ancestors had become secondary to Heaven, and the ritual program had undergone changes. Humans no longer were included among the sacrifices and consorts were excluded from the ancestral temples (Lewis 1999b, 649–50; Rawski 1988, 231–4). Like the Han, the Tang Dynasty established Imperial Ancestral Temples (*taimiao*) where the emperors made burnt offerings of wine and sacrificial animals to the spirit tablets of their patrilineal ancestors (Wechsler 1985, 123–41; McMullen 1988, 139–47). As a legitimization ideology, imperial ancestor worship can be viewed as a secondary layer subordinate to the cult of Heaven. Invoking the special powers of deceased patrilineal ancestors protected the dynasty and established emperors as paragons of filial piety. However, the imperial forefathers had a narrow focus on defending the ruling house. Heaven became the more important legitimizing symbol because it was a universal god concerned with the well-being of the greater empire with the power to replace a bad dynasty (Schwartz 1985, 29, 38–9).

Little is known about non-elite ancestral worship in the Sui-Tang period or earlier, but in Late Imperial China, popular orthopraxy reflected the influence of Confucian ritual prescriptions. Male forebears were more likely to be objects of veneration than female ones. Wooden tablets normally represented the ancestors, but variant modes of portrayal existed, such as paper used by the poor and portraits by the rich. The representations of the deceased forebears were placed on an altar in the home, but elite families, like the imperial houses, might have separate halls or temples. Worship, as in the Confucian imperial rituals, generally involved offerings of food and drink to the ancestors because of the belief that they required nourishment (Naquin 1988, 44–5; Martin 1988, 176–7; Thompson 1988).

## B. Turkic Ideology

Although Heaven-mandated rule and worship of ancestors normally are considered hallmarks of Chinese culture, Turkic beliefs show some strong parallels. As in Confucian ideology, establishing claims to Turkic sacred legitimacy began with earthly accomplishments. The secular values that qaghans ideally exemplified—bravery

and wisdom—reflected the skills necessary to gain power in the nomadic realm. A qaghan who created a new dynasty obviously had to be adroit at political networking and combat, and these talents were also requirements for his heirs, who inevitably became involved in typical Turko-Mongol succession struggles. The need for rulers who could lead troops to victory and outwit enemies probably explains why bravery and wisdom were the main kingship ideals that appear in indigenous inscriptions of the Second Türk and Uighur empires (Mori 1981, 47–50). For example, all twelve Uighur qaghans who ruled from 744 to 839 had honorific titles—which in the Turkic tradition describe the qualities of a qaghan—that included the epithet *Bilgä*, meaning “wise.” Eight of the twelve contain the epithet *Alp* “brave” (Hamilton [1955] 1988, 139–41). Turkic kingship ideals deviated from Chinese ones in placing greater emphasis on the ruler’s wisdom than virtuous conduct, but the Tang’s above-mentioned stress on complementing the emperor’s moral virtue with martial prowess created an area of strong overlap.

Ancestor worship conventionally has been considered a hallmark of Confucian civilization, but if it is defined broadly as “communication between ancestors and the living,” some anthropologists consider it an almost universal aspect of indigenous religion (Steadman et al. 1996, 64). Aside from this general characteristic, the Turko-Mongol and Confucian traditions of ancestor veneration share more specific beliefs and rituals. Turko-Mongol peoples viewed ancestors as protective deities. Popular forms of worship included hearth rituals in which wooden or felt figures of female ancestors were venerated with offerings of fat, grease, koumiss, or other beverages (DeWeese 1994, 36–47; Golden 1998, 196). We do not know whether Turkic hearth rituals were carried out during the seventh and eighth centuries, but there is evidence of elite, graveside ancestor worship, mainly of male ancestors, including food offerings. Textual sources describe funeral rites in which a painting or stone sculpture of the deceased was erected at the site of the burial (SS 84:1864; Ecsedy 1984, 280). Archaeological research has identified several hundred mainly male Turkic statues, dating from the sixth to tenth centuries, at funeral sites across Inner Asia. These evidently are some of the grander memorials to the deceased tribal elite. The stone figures frequently hold bowls or cups at the waist or chest (chapter 5, Fig. 5.3). Historical and anthropological research demonstrates that the statues probably were objects of ritual veneration that might include feasting by family and friends. Evidently, the stone bowls or cups were meant to offer perpetual nourishment to the spirits of the deceased, or perhaps more specifically to provide the “water of life” that was believed to sustain heroes and shamans (DeWeese 1994, 47, n. 36; Erdélyi et al. 2000, 97–8; Golden 1998, 203–4; Vainshtein 1989, 59–61, 65; Wang and Qi 1995, 239–42). The worship of the statues also may be connected to the practice known among Turko-Mongol tribes of designating a “First Man” who was ritually venerated as the tribal progenitor. The First Man sanctified political unity through a shared belief in common—and often fictive—kinship (DeWeese 1994, 49–50).

Ancestral rituals of Turko-Mongol royal lineages are not fully understood, but appear to have included some aspects of the worship described above. Caves, symbolizing the womb, figure prominently in myths as the birthplace of First Man, and at least some tribes had grottoes that served as sites of ritual veneration (DeWeese 1994, 44). After they established the Northern Wei Dynasty, the Sārbi's royal Tabgach (Tuoba) lineage preserved a legend of ancestor worship at a cavern in eastern Inner Mongolia prior to their migration southwestwards to take control of North China. The *Wei shu* (History of the Wei, WS) mentions that the putative ancestral cave was "rediscovered" in 443. Emperor Taiwudi sent a civil official to carve a commemorative inscription and offer sacrifices of thanks to the Heaven and Earth deities. In 1980 Chinese archaeologists were stunned to discover an artificial cave containing the epigraph. Unlike the sanitized version of the inscription preserved in *History of the Wei*, the cave's text mentions that the ancestors were a "qaghan" and his consort the "qatun" (WS 181:2738; Dien 1991, 41; Mi 1981, 1–3). In another example, a cavern also is connected to one myth about the genesis of the royal Ashina lineage of the Türks. According to the legend, a she-wolf mated with a boy and gave birth in a cave to ten offspring, one of whom became the progenitor of the Ashina (SS 49:1863; ZS 42:907–8). During the First Türk Empire, every year the qaghan and nobles carried out ritual sacrifices at a sacred grotto in the Ötükan (Khangai) Mountains at the headwaters of Orkhon River in Mongolia (Map 1.4; ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; Golden 1982, 42–4, 1992, 150–1). The imperial rites at womb-like caves, and the common tribespeople's worship of female ancestors at the hearth were distinctive elements of Turko-Mongol veneration of the deceased. Both practices demonstrate a propensity to elevate the status of female family members.

A new development in the veneration of deceased members of the royal Ashina lineage came during the Second Türk Empire. Tang Xuanzong sent artisans to Mongolia after Kül Tegin's death in 731, and again after the death of his older brother and close comrade, Bilgä Qaghan, in 734, to aid in constructing temples and steles to commemorate the brothers' lives. Each temple included a statue of the deceased and battle scenes from their lives painted on the walls (JTS 8:202, 194a:5176; XTS 215b:6056; ZZTJ 214:6809; CFYG 999:18b; QJJ 11:4a–b; Pelliot 1929, 234–48). Political propaganda must have been one function of the painted battle scenes, which would have complemented the stele inscriptions that celebrated the heroic deeds of the two brothers. The temple complexes also served as status symbols, as evidenced from the boasts in the inscriptions that the Tang emperor honored requests to assist in building an "extraordinary mausoleum . . . decorated with wonderful paintings and sculptures" (Tekin 1968, 263, 281). The images may have been intended as objects of ritual reverence, but there is no direct evidence. Ancestral worship at temples would represent a convergence of imperial Turkic and Confucian practices.

Ancestor worship may have been a pervasive aspect of Turkic religion, but a cult of the Turkic god of Heaven, called Tängri, played a larger role in legitimizing



qaghans. As a number of scholars point out, Tängri's characteristics parallel those of the Confucian god of heaven, Tian (Sanping Chen 2002; Di Cosmo 2002a, 171–2; Golden 1982, 48). Tängri was the most powerful god and bestowed *qut* or “holy (sacred) charisma” to rule upon qaghans, which was somewhat akin to the Confucian heavenly mandate (Mori 1981, 72–4; Golden 2006, 40–4; Roux 1959). Many qaghans of the Second Türk and Uighur empires went even further to claim Tängri as their father by including the phrase “Heaven-Conceived” (Tängridä) in their regnal titles (Golden 1982, 45; Mori 1981). Early Turkic sources are extremely limited in number, so it is not surprising that Turkologists disagree about the degree to which Heaven's will was predestined or influenced by fate. However, Mori Masao presents evidence that the Türks believed that they had a degree of free will to win or lose the favor of Heaven (Mori 1981, 47–63). Another point of ambiguity is the degree to which Turkic peoples considered Tängri to be their tribal god. On the one hand Tängri seems concerned only with the well-being of the Turkic peoples (Giraud 1960, 102–3; Mori 1981, 52–3). On the other hand, Tängri appears to have the power to grant universal rule to the Türk qaghans. In the words of Bilgä Qaghan of the second empire:

Eastwards to the sunrise, southwards to the midday, westwards as far as the sunset, and northwards to the midnight—all the peoples within these boundaries (are subject to me) (Tekin 1968, 261).

The Uighur inscriptions are even more explicit in claiming dominion over the “four quarters (of the world)” (Klyashtorny 1982, 344; Tekin 1983, 50). Thus, the Turkic Tängri appears similar to the Chinese Tian in that both are universal deities of Heaven that developed special relationships with monarchs. Ritual worship of Tängri also had similarities to Confucian orthopraxy. The qaghan and nobles gathered at the Tuoren (Orkhon?) River in the middle of the fifth lunar month, roughly the time of the summer solstice, to sacrifice numerous sheep and horses as offerings to Tängri (ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; SS 84:1864; TD 197:5404). Confucian sacrifices to Heaven also occurred outdoors during a solstice, but in China the location was the southern suburbs of the capital at the winter solstice. The contrasting choice of solstices can probably be attributed to differences in their subsistence economies. Each ritual occurred at the solstice after the most fecund season, which was for China the fall agricultural harvest and for Inner Asia the spring birthing of livestock.

In the Eastern Eurasian cultural zone, people accepted the notion that a supreme heavenly deity chose political leadership, and ancestors offered advice and protection to living descendants who should reciprocate by venerating and nourishing the spirits of the deceased. The rituals to Heaven had somewhat similar forms, involving burnt sacrificial offerings outdoors during a solstice. Imperial ritual worship of ancestors was more distinctive. In particular, Türk veneration of a she-wolf



at a cave would have seemed exotic or barbaric to orthodox Confucians. In terms of political legitimization, Eastern Eurasian rulers with imperial ambitions shared a preference for placing the cult of Heaven in a primary position above ancestor worship. Ancestors mainly protected the dynasties of their descendants. The universality of Heaven, on the other hand, gave it wider appeal and probably is one reason why, as we will see below, it played a more prominent role in interstate relations.

Research on the inception of these common beliefs is outside of the scope of this book, but it is likely to be found deep in the past and involve ongoing exchanges in borderland regions. Several scholars have advanced this kind of hypothesis regarding the worship of Heaven. They note that the Zhou Dynasty, which had origins in the northwestern China borderlands, introduced Heaven worship to Chinese culture (Sanping Chen 2002; Di Cosmo 2002a, 171–2; Golden 1982, 48). Ancestor veneration is a less-noted commonality, but the pervasive belief that the living continue to be connected to their ancestors may point to entanglements deep in the past.

### III. Ideological Competition and Convergence

Although this book will not investigate the ancient roots of these Eastern Eurasian uniformities, it will explore an ongoing interchange of ideas in the sixth through eighth centuries that resulted from ideological battles between the Sui-Tang and neighboring Turkic empires. As polities competed with each other, they engaged in a war of ideas, mainly involving relationships claimed between rulers and the heavenly deity. Tang and Turkic legitimacy ideals finally settled into more stable orthodoxy by the middle of the eighth century.

#### A. Origins

There is no clear evidence of ideological competition prior to the rise of the Türks and the Sui Empire, despite the prevalence of rulers of Inner Asian origin in North China from the fourth century onward. Sanping Chen has advanced the hypothesis that some monarchs of the Sixteen Kingdoms period used the previously unknown title of “Heavenly King” (*tianwang*) as a Chinese translation of Tängri. If true, this would represent the earliest known claim to simultaneous kingship over Chinese and Inner Asian peoples. The Tabgach rulers of the Northern Wei apparently avoided claims of steppe rulership even when they had their capital in the borderlands of northern Shanxi. Taiwudi’s above-mentioned cave inscription of 443 distinguished between himself as the Son of Heaven and his ancestors who ruled as qaghan and *qatun* (Sanping Chen 2002, 306–11; Mi 1981, 2). Even though Taiwudi was the most powerful ruler of the Northern Wei and had unified North China

and much of Inner Mongolia, he eschewed this opportunity to assert that he was a simultaneous Son of Heaven and qaghan. Meanwhile, in Mongolia, Türk qaghans initially followed the earlier Rouran custom of taking Turkic regnal titles with honorific prefixes that glorified and legitimized their accomplishments (BS 98:3251; Luo 2009, 4). For example, the founder, Ashina Bumïn, reigned as Illig (Chinese: *yili*) Qaghan or “State-possessing” Qaghan (ZS 50:908–9; Drompp 2005a, 103–4). The honorific epithet “Illig” was meant to encapsulate the essence of his reign as dynastic founder.

Eastern Eurasian ideological competition began in the wake of the Sui founding in 581 and the division of the Türk Empire into warring eastern and western halves in 582. Ishbara Qaghan (r. 581–87), who ruled the Mongolian sector of the empire, seems to have been an ideological innovator. He is the first known qaghan with a lengthy Turkic honorific title, reigning as Illig Kül Shad Bagha Ishbara Qaghan (*yili julu she mohe shiboluo kehan*) (ZS 50:909; SS 84:1865; Golden 1992, 132; Mori 1981, 72–3). Moreover, Ishbara appears to have been the first to coin a title of simultaneous kingship, which occurred in 584 when he sought peace with the Sui Wendi in hopes of gaining an advantage over his Western Türk enemies. The simultaneous title was contained in the form of a “letter between equals” that adhered to Confucian rhetorical protocols. Ishbara addressed the correspondence to the “August Emperor of the Great Sui” (*da Sui huangdi*) with the “August Emperor” title only indicating recognition of rule over the Middle Kingdom. Ishbara Qaghan may have been asserting superior status because his titles included the purely Turkic one, noted above, plus a Chinese regnal title of “Son of Heaven” with an utterly unique honorific prefix that syncretically combined Turkic and Confucian ideals of world dominance: “Heaven-born, Great Türks’ All Under Heaven, Wise Sage, Son of Heaven” (*cong tiansheng da Tujue tianxia xiansheng tianzi*).<sup>8</sup> Claims to being heaven-born and wise are common elements of Turkic regnal titles, but Ishbara was appropriating Son of Heaven for himself and not Sui Wendi! Wendi fought back ideologically by issuing an edict from the “Great Sui Son of Heaven” that addressed Ishbara only by his Turkic honorific regnal title, Illig Kül Shad Bagha Ishbara Qaghan of the Great Türks. Nonetheless, Ishbara’s title marks the first known assertion of simultaneous bilingual and bicultural kingship in Eastern Eurasia.

The foundations of Ishbara Qaghan’s claim to simultaneous rulership were laid in the several decades of Türk imperial expansion throughout Eurasia that included relations with Särbi-ruled dynasties in North China. Ishbara’s title probably was not his direct invention. It is clear that Ishbara personally was unfamiliar with Chinese terminology of political relationships because, later in negotiations, he asked his retainers the meaning of the Chinese term *chen* (official or vassal) (SS 84:1869). Most likely the retainers were the bilingual and bicultural officials who had helped Ishbara devise the letter to Wendi. Perhaps Ishbara’s officials were drawn from the large cohort who had come to the Türks after the fall of the Northern Qi in 577 when the last surviving son of the Särbi emperor and 1500 followers fled to the

camp of Taspar Qaghan (ZZTJ 173:5375; Eisenberg 2008, 101). Similar Sino-Turkic regnal designations may have predated Ishbara's reign. The most likely reason the *Sui History* preserves this particular title was to portray Ishbara as a presumptuous aspirant to become a "barbarian" Son of Heaven. Later in negotiations, Wendi won the ideological battle when Ishbara accepted status as a Sui vassal (chapter 6). Ishbara Qaghan needed the peace agreement more than Wendi. The former faced an imminent and dangerous threat from the Western Türks, while the latter only sought to secure his northern border in order to attack the militarily weak Southern Chen Dynasty (557–589). Although Ishbara certainly had overreached at this particular juncture, the title would have had a closer basis in reality a decade earlier when Taspar Qaghan had called the emperors of the Northern Zhou and Qi his "filial sons." At the time, there usually were over one thousand Turks in the Northern Zhou capital whom Confucian historians described condescendingly as "dressed in silk and feasting on meat," but obviously some may have been learning the Chinese language and subtleties of rhetoric, or at least recruiting individuals who could help them with these matters of state (ZS 50:911; SS 84:1864–7). Although the exact origins of Ishbara's Sino-Turkic regnal title cannot be traced, it evidently emerged from a multicultural stew that was the product of Türk imperial expansion and extensive diplomatic contacts.

Sui emperors were the next known Eastern Eurasian rulers to have titles recognizing simultaneous kingship, which perhaps is not surprising because the balance of power between China and Mongolia tipped more in favor of the Sui after Wendi conquered southern China in 589. When a loser in the power struggles in Mongolia fled to Inner Mongolia seeking Sui aid in 599, Wendi invested him as a Sui vassal with a Turkic honorific epithet and regnal title, *Yili zhendou Qimin* Qaghan (hereafter Qimin Qaghan). The *Sui History* claims the title means "Wise and Strong" (SS 84:1870–3; Pan 1997, 104–7). With Sui assistance, Qimin Qaghan was able to gain suzerainty over Mongolia by 603. In light of these developments, it is not surprising that in a memorial of 600, Qimin Qaghan addressed Wendi as "Sage of the Great Sui, *Bayan?* Qaghan" (*da Sui shengren moyuan kehan*).<sup>9</sup> Once again, the origin of the title is a mystery. It could represent Wendi's claim to simultaneous kingship or Qimin Qaghan could have chosen the title to express his acceptance of Wendi as his master. The authors of the *Sui history*, promulgated in 639 during Taizong's reign, would have had a powerful motive to suppress Wendi's putative assertion to simultaneous kingship because it would have stolen some thunder from Taizong's claim of 630 to be Heavenly Qaghan. In any case, the person or persons who devised the title had to have been bicultural and well-educated. One non-Chinese language element of the epithet, *bayan* (*moyuan*), is not clearly understood.<sup>10</sup> However, sage (*shengren*) evidently was carefully chosen to resonate with the Turkic, Confucian, and perhaps Buddhist traditions. *Shengren* is a common Chinese expression, sometimes used as a respectful form of address toward an emperor, meaning a person possessing the utmost morality and wisdom. It also refers to enlightened

Buddhist beings, and may be related to Buddhism's prominence as a Sui legitimizing ideology (Luo 1990–4, 8:664).<sup>11</sup> The epithet cleverly incorporates each secular quality of kingship that was most valued in the Confucian and Turkic traditions: morality for the Confucians and wisdom for the Türks. Finally, the assertion that Wendi and Qimin Qaghan both were qaghans was not unusual. Turkic polities typically had supreme and subordinate qaghans, and the Orkhon inscriptions of the Second Türk Empire describe the emperors of the Tang (Tabgach) and Tibet (Tüpüt) as qaghans (Drompp 1991). Qimin would have been considered the junior qaghan in the political arrangement.

As Sui power dissolved in civil war in the late 610s, the Türk qaghans lorded over North China from their territory in Inner Mongolia. Türks and North China warlords became involved in creating many examples of simultaneous rulership. Most of the warlords accepted the Turkic title of qaghan while simultaneously claiming Chinese kingship or emperorship (Skaff 2004, 123–5). Liu Wuzhou, whose rise is mentioned in the previous chapter, is instructive. After the initial success of his uprising, he declared himself governor of Mayi Commandery (modern Datong in the borderland periphery). As military victories brought much of northern Hedong (modern Shanxi) under his control, he was ready to take more ambitious titles. Liu founded the Dingyang Dynasty, proclaimed himself August Emperor, appointed his wife Empress, and in keeping with imperial Chinese custom, adopted Heavenly Prosperity (Tianxing) as a reign era name. He also staked claims to simultaneous kingship when he became the outer client of Shibi Qaghan who invested him with the title of Dingyang Qaghan (JTS 55:2252–3; XTS 86:3711–2; ZZTJ 183:5718, 5723). His reign era name is particularly significant. Daowudi (r. 386–409) of the Northern Wei, who ruled an expanding borderland kingdom with a capital at Datong, was the only other previous emperor who had a Heavenly Prosperity reign era (*Zhongguo* 1994, 213). Liu Wuzhou's adoption of the same reign era name may reflect a degree of identification with the Särbi, local pride at the revival of Datong as a major center of political power, and/or a desire to associate his rule with Heaven, the key legitimizing divinity. One of Liu Wuzhou's allies in raiding Tang territory, the Jihu leader Liu Jizhen, took the Turkic honorific and regnal title of "Tuli Qaghan."<sup>12</sup> However, Jizhen's father, Liu Long'er, had declared himself a Chinese-style "King" (JTS 39:1486; XTS 39:1006; YHJX 14:398).<sup>13</sup> Although we do not know about the self-identities of Liu Wuzhou, Liu Long'er, or Liu Jizhen—their surname was used by Han and Jihu in Hedong—their titles of kingship included elements that could appeal to Han, Turkic, Särbi, or other peoples living in the borderlands.

Liang Shidu, the warlord who controlled the borderlands of central Guannei, presents another fascinating case of simultaneous kingship. Liang was a local elite from Shuofang Commandery (Xiazhou during the Tang) who served as a Sui garrison commandant, but as political instability increased near the end of the dynasty, he returned home. Liang initially appeared to be operating within the expectations

of the Confucian worldview during his rise to regional power. When bandits plagued his area, Liang secretly formed a band of several tens of followers to serve as a local protective force. Soon after, he rebelled by killing the local Sui official (JTS 56:2280; XTS 87:3730; ZZTJ 183:5718, 5724). Demonstrating that Liang had wider political ambitions, he proclaimed himself Grand Counselor-in-Chief (*da chengxiang*), which is the same title that the founders of the Sui and Tang held while acting as regents to boy emperors before usurping power (SS 1:3; JTS 1:4; XTS 1:5). When Liang's military successes gave him regional dominance, he assumed emperors in accordance with Confucian ritual prescriptions. He proclaimed himself August Emperor of the Liang Kingdom, established a new calendar, and made sacrifices to Heaven in the southern suburbs.<sup>14</sup> He also took an original and elegant reign era name of Forever Eminent (Yonglong), which was later adopted by Tang Gaozong (*Zhongguo* 1994, 229; Rothschild 2006). Liang also claimed to have discovered a portent justifying his rule when he obtained an imperial seal after burying jade in the ground. All of these measures were taken with an eye to Chinese tradition, including the choice of the name Liang for his kingdom, which not only matched his surname, but also had regional significance. During the Sixteen Kingdoms period five different Liang dynasties of Han or Inner Asian origin had ruled parts of Hexi and Guannei (Dien 2001, 60).

In addition to all of his efforts to depict himself as a worthy Confucian ruler, Liang also was willing to assume titles of simultaneous kingship. He became an outer client of Shibi Qaghan who invested Liang with the bilingual titles of "Magnanimous Bilgä Qaghan" (*dadu piqie kehan*) and "Percipient Son of Heaven" (*jieshi tianzi*) (JTS 56:2280; XTS 87:3730; ZZTJ 183:5718, 5724). By 620, when Liang's position weakened, he urged Shibi's younger brother and successor, Chuluo Qaghan, to imitate the Sārbi by invading and occupying the Middle Kingdom. Chuluo began to plan the invasion, but after he died suddenly, the proposal was abandoned (JTS 56:2280; XTS 87:3730; ZZTJ 188:5895–6). Liang Shidu may have been a former Sui military commander who was familiar with Confucian statecraft and rituals, but he also was a borderland inhabitant willing to become a subordinate qaghan and support Türk rule over the Middle Kingdom. Tang Taizong once said that he considered Liang to be "an inhabitant of the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo*) who stole my territory and committed atrocities against my people" (ZZTJ 192:6050). Taizong's complaints related to Liang's political behavior, not his willingness to accommodate Turkic culture.

## B. Heavenly Qaghan Ideology

The next known incidence of China-Inner Asia ideological competition occurred when Taizong was proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan in the wake of the Tang conquest of the First Türk Empire in 630. Less than one month after the Tang victory, foreign leaders and Tang officials gathered on April 20 at the imperial palace in Chang'an

for a carefully choreographed display of political theater. The “chiefs of the four barbarians” (*siyi qiuzhang*) went to the palace and ritually requested that the emperor take the title of Heavenly Qaghan. Taizong replied, “I am the Son of Heaven of the Great Tang, and henceforth also will attend to the affairs of the Heavenly Qaghan!” In response the gathered Tang officials and chiefs proclaimed, “Long life!” Taizong’s new title led to changes in Confucian diplomatic protocols because correspondence to the rulers of the northern and western regions thereafter was issued under the seal of the “August Emperor, Heavenly Qaghan,” rather than the previously orthodox “August Emperor, Son of Heaven” (ZZTJ 193:6073; THY 73:1312, 100:1796).

Many scholars have commented on the significance of this event, pointing out that Taizong’s appropriation of the “Qaghan” title represented a claim to simultaneous rule over China and the steppe, and implicitly acknowledged the equality of Han and Turko-Mongols within the empire (Pulleyblank 1976, 38; Pan 1997 179–80; Crossley 1992, 1473). Though this conventional interpretation is not wrong, the focus on the emperor calling himself a “qaghan” only captures one of the several levels of meaning that resonated with the Turko-Mongol chiefs who congregated in Chang’an. Taizong’s use of the qaghan title was not pathbreaking. As mentioned previously, qaghan was a secular title, roughly meaning king or emperor, often held simultaneously by a number of rulers. The idea of a qaghan ruling over all or part of the Middle Kingdom had precedents during the Sui Dynasty and the early Tang. As of 630, there were other qaghans in Eastern Eurasia ruling over the Sir-Yantuo in Mongolia (JTS 199b:5344; XTS 217b:6135; ZZTJ 192:6061) and Tuyuhun in Koko-nor (JTS 198:5298; XTS 221a:6224–5; ZZTJ 194:6106–7; Molè 1970, xxvii, 47–9). On the other hand, two less noticed aspects of the occasion were unique and more likely elicited a subjective response from the participants that would have aided in legitimizing Taizong’s rule over the Türks. One is the similarity of the gathering to a nomadic accession ceremony, and the other is the significance of Heaven as a legitimizing ideology.

Taizong’s gathering of Türks at the capital mimicked a *quriltai*, which was an assembly of nomadic chiefs that either determined a successor to a deceased qaghan or proclaimed the formal accession of a ruler who had united tribes by conquest. The *quriltai* of the Türks are not well-documented. The Bugut stele describes a ceremony of 572 in which Taspar Qaghan acceded to the request of tribal elites to “rule the seven continents . . . and feed the people!” After Taspar’s death in 581, a similar accession seems to have occurred, but the successor, Umna [Anluo] Qaghan additionally “ordered to establish a great stone of law.”<sup>15</sup> More is known about thirteenth-century Mongol *quriltai*. Like the Turkic ceremony, the Mongol rite included ritual requests that a new leader take the throne, followed by promulgation of laws. In addition, Mongol accessions are known to have included patrimonial rewards and feasts and the organization of government (Cleaves 1982, 141–2; Dawson 1980, 60–6; Spuler [1972] 1996, 23–4, 46–52).<sup>16</sup> Taizong’s elevation to Heavenly Qaghan may have appeared to Turko-Mongols as a formal accession ceremony. The collected



chiefs ritually beseeched Taizong, who had defeated them militarily, to become their qaghan. The only other aspect of the *quriltai* that definitely was involved was administrative organization. In June 630, after the court debates described in chapter 2, the Türks were arranged in bridle districts (chapter 8). Unfortunately, the extant descriptions of the event are terse—and Taizong’s assumption of the title is not even recorded in the *Old Tang history* and *New Tang history*, apparently because of the disapproval of the literati authors—so it is impossible to determine whether all elements of a *quriltai* were present.

Fortunately, Taizong hosted another, better documented event at which he again was proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan. This *quriltai*-like gathering took place after the Tang—allied with the Tiele tribes under the Uighur chief, Tumidu—defeated the Sir-Yantuo in Mongolia in late September 646. The Tiele, which had been among the outer tribes of the Sir-Yantuo, transferred their loyalty to the Tang. They sent several thousand dignitaries to Lingzhou in the borderlands of western Guannei for a rendezvous with Taizong in late October. If the number of Tiele is reliable, it probably represents the tribal leadership down to the level of camp head.<sup>17</sup> At the initial meeting, the assembled tribesmen offered a ritual request to Taizong: “Your slaves [clients] beseech Heaven’s most august to serve as our Heavenly Qaghan” (ZZTJ 198:6238–40). The entire party stayed more than a month in Lingzhou, though there are no records on what transpired there. They headed to Chang’an in December, where events are somewhat better documented. Taizong hosted a banquet at the palace in late January for Tumidu of the Uighur and other elite Tiele chiefs (JTS 195:5196; XTS 217a:6111; ZZTJ 198:6240, 6242–3; CFYG 970:12b; Eisenberg 2002–3). The grand finale to this extended gathering occurred in mid-February when the tribes were organized into bridle districts. The Tiele chiefs became Tang clients. Each received the credentials of a Tang official, an iron fish tally with gilded lettering.<sup>18</sup> Taizong rewarded the chiefs with gold and silver wares, polychrome silk twill robes, and ornamented swords. The assembly concluded with a grand drinking party. While Taizong secluded himself in a pavilion, per Confucian ritual prescription (Schafer 1977, 133), Tumidu and his several thousand subordinates were lavishly entertained. In front of Taizong’s pavilion was a tall pedestal topped by a silver pitcher overflowing with wine. Produced from a hidden source, the wine flowed downward into a silver basin with a capacity of 100 *hu* (6,000 liters). Supposedly, the assembled chiefs drank their fill and the basin was not even half empty (JTS 195:5196; XTS 217a:6112–3; ZZTJ 198:6244–5). Taizong’s wine fountain seems somewhat analogous to the silver tree with four gilded serpents dispensing alcoholic beverages at the palace of the Mongol Khan, Möngke, in the thirteenth century (Dawson 1980, 176). In both cases a superabundance of alcohol created an impression of the boundless wealth, power, and generosity of the ruler.

Taizong’s extended interaction with the Tiele from late October 646 to mid-February 647 had all of the elements of a *quriltai*. The chiefs ritually requested that



Taizong become the Heavenly Qaghan. Taizong signaled his acceptance of the role by offering banquets and gifts, organizing the tribes politically, and then sending the chiefs back to Mongolia to serve as outer clients. The length of the gathering, over a month, should not be considered unusual. For example, the Mongol Ögödei Khan's *quriltai* lasted over forty days (Spuler [1972] 1996, 49–52). In summary, Taizong's political behavior, as patrimonial benefactor and lawgiver, made him a worthy secular qaghan in the eyes of the Uighur and other Tiele.

Taizong's convening two *quriltai*-like affairs also included sacral aspects of Turkic kingship with the choice of the honorific epithet "Heavenly" to describe his khanate. "Heavenly Qaghan" was an innovative title that deviated from Confucian and Turkic orthodoxy, yet managed to brilliantly create a bridge between the two cultures. Conventionally, a Chinese emperor was the Son of Heaven (Tian) and Turkic supreme qaghan was Heaven (Tängri)-born or Heaven (Tängri)-conceived. The title Heavenly Qaghan called attention to the fact that "Tian" and "Tängri" were not tribal or cultural gods, but merely different designations for the same supreme deity of Heaven. The Heavenly qaghan also audaciously claimed not to be heaven's junior kin on earth, which was the orthodox position in both cultures, but to be the earthly embodiment of Heaven. As such, he was the only legitimate supreme king on earth. To Turko-Mongol peoples who accepted Tang rule, the sacral aspect of the ideology bludgeoned them with the message that the *qut*, the heaven-endowed sacred charisma, had passed from their royal lineages to the Tang House of Li. The claim had real legitimacy because it was backed up by military victories on the battlefield and patrimonial banquets with bottomless fountains of wine. The perceived military and sacred power of the Heavenly Qaghan in part may explain why the Türks in the Ordos region acquiesced to Tang rule for half a century.

The creator or creators of the Heavenly Qaghan title are not known, but bicultural individuals must have been involved. The connection between Tian and Tängri may have been common knowledge among the elite northwestern lineages of the early Tang, many of whom were Särbi through matrilineal or patrilineal descent. The Särbi rulers of the Northern Wei Dynasty had made the conceptual link earlier in history. After initially establishing separate rituals, they eventually fused the worship of Tian and Tängri (Eberhard 1965, 144). Even the literati Confucian authors of the standard histories made the connection between the two gods. They refer to the Türk god of Heaven as Tian rather than transcribing it as Tängri (*dengli*), as mentioned previously. Taizong had a bicultural background that establishes him a candidate to have been one of the inventors, or at least explains his willingness to accept the title. Not only was his Li lineage of mixed Han-Särbi ancestry, he was highly intelligent, well-educated in the Confucian classics, and possessed a great deal of experience fighting and negotiating with the Türks. Although Taizong often is regarded as an exceptional individual, he was not unusual for his age.

### C. A Buddhist-Influenced Interlude

Empress Wu's informal reign in the 680s and her subsequent formal establishment of the Zhou Dynasty in 690 marked one of the high points of ideological innovation and syncretism in imperial Chinese history. However, in keeping with her concern for internal consolidation of power, her ideological appeals were not couched specifically toward Turko-Mongols. Still, she appears to have considered ethnic minorities to be an important constituency within the empire. For example, the "chiefs of the four barbarians" were among the sixty thousand subjects—including member of the Tang's Li lineage, commoners, and Buddhist and Daoist clergy—who ritually petitioned her to establish her own Zhou Dynasty in 690. When the accession ceremony took place, she took a Confucian title with a prefixed epithet that deviated from the norm, "Sage Divinity, August Emperor" (*shengshen huangdi*) (ZZTJ 204:6467; Guisso 1978, 68). The title's emphasis on wisdom and sacral kingship would have resonated with Turko-Mongol peoples, but moved farther away from the direct appeals to their loyalty that Heavenly Qaghan represented. Over the next five years, she revised her prefixed epithets on several occasions, adding and subtracting Buddhist and Confucian elements until she settled on "Heaven-Appointed, Golden Wheel, Great Sage, August Emperor" (*tiance jinlun dasheng huangdi*) in fall of 695 (JTS 6:124; XTS 4:95; ZZTJ 205:6492–7, 6503; Guisso 1978, 45). The first element, "Heaven-Appointed" restored a direct reference to the heavenly mandate. The inclusion of "Golden Wheel" has garnered the most attention because it was an allusion to the ideal Buddhist *Ākṣarvartin*, or wheel-turning king, who implemented Buddhist law on earth. In doing so, she followed a legitimization practice of the Sui and some earlier northern dynasties, but broke with the Tang by elevating Buddhism to a status higher than Daoism. A unique element of her patronage of Buddhism was the establishment of Great Cloud temples in each prefecture of the empire. The temples housed copies of the *Great cloud sutra*, which included commentary justifying female rulership based on the claim that she was a Maitreya or incarnate Buddha (Guisso 1978, 26–50, 66–9).<sup>19</sup> In 700, she removed all unorthodox references from her title, reducing it to the standard "August Emperor," at a time when she was confronting her mortality and was fixated on Daoist longevity potions (XTS 4:101; ZZTJ 206:6546; Rothschild 2006, 186–7). Perhaps in her final years she implicitly was placing Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism on equal footing. Overall, her titles had downplayed direct appeals to Turkic ideals of emperors in favor of Buddhist and Confucian ones. On the other hand, her unorthodox and flamboyant use of prefixed elements perhaps was inspired by the contemporary Turkic practice of affixing honorific epithets to the regnal title.

During Empress Wu's Zhou Dynasty, her nemesis was Qapaghan Qaghan, the most powerful ruler of the Second Türk Empire. Qapaghan raided heavily and apparently toyed with the idea of conquering China, because in 698, during his deepest incursion he claimed to be seeking to restore the Tang Dynasty (JTS 194a:5169;

XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6530–1). As future chapters will demonstrate, the qaghan and empress were involved in ongoing negotiations in which she usually temporized or made concessions. The effects of their ideological competition are reflected in the syncretic regnal title that Qapaghan used in 714 a few years before his death, when he sent an emissary to Xuanzong’s court for negotiations: “Supernal, Harmonious, and Eternally Pure Father of the Consort of the [Tang] Imperial Princess; Man of Heaven, Obtainer of Karmic Reward in Heaven; Sage in Heaven Qutlugh Qaghan of the Türks” (*qianhe yongqing tai fuma, tianshang de guobao tian-nan, Tujue shengtian guduolu kehan*) (ZZTJ 211:6699). The clearest indication that this title was partly devised during ideological competition with Empress Wu was the use of Buddhist terminology of “karmic reward.” Just as Empress Wu’s claims to Buddhist rulership were unique for the early Tang, Qapaghan’s usage is the lone example among the Türks. The title also includes familiar references to the wisdom of the qaghan and heavenly mandated nature of his rule, which would have resonated with the Turkic and Chinese traditions. On the other hand, the usage of “Man of Heaven” rather than the orthodox Confucian “Son of Heaven” would have grated on Chinese ears. The first part of the title is unique. It includes a string of well-chosen felicitous Chinese expressions, “Supernal, Harmonious, and Eternally Pure” followed by a reference to the title typically given to the husbands of Chinese imperial princesses, *fuma* or “Consort of the Imperial Princess.”<sup>20</sup> This particular epithet most likely alludes to the successive betrothals of Tang princesses to Qapaghan Qaghan’s sons in 703, 711, and 713, although the weddings never took place (chapter 7, Table 7.2; Mori 1967, 192–3). We do not know who devised the title, but, as will be discussed below, there probably were people literate in Turkic, Sogdian, and Chinese at Qapaghan’s court. If the strange or garbled parts of the title do not represent intentional machinations of the Türks, the errors could be the mistakes of Türk or Sogdian authors writing in Chinese, or careless or malicious alterations made by Chinese copyists.

#### D. Decline of Competition

After the bold syncretism of Empress Wu and Qapaghan Qaghan, Tang and Turkic ideological innovations slowed in the eighth century. Xuanzong apparently revived Taizong’s approach to simultaneous kingship by reclaiming the Heavenly Qaghan title in diplomatic correspondence. The evidence is not plentiful—which is not surprising because the literati Confucian historians never considered Taizong’s original claim of being Heavenly Qaghan to be worthy of much attention—but several extant diplomatic letters to Xuanzong from the Türks and other peoples demonstrate that they used the Heavenly Qaghan terminology in formal correspondence.<sup>21</sup> The Türks took a different approach in non-diplomatic usage. Their inscriptions of the second empire referred to Tang emperors as “Tabgach Qaghans,” the same name as the royal Särbi lineage that had established the Northern Wei Dynasty (Drompp

1991).<sup>22</sup> The continued use of Tabgach to refer to Tang emperors could be an anachronism or perhaps was recognition that the Tang House was Sārbi in their maternal line and that many Sārbi or part-Sārbi continued to live in North China. Whether the Türks called Tang emperors the neutral “Tabgach Qaghan” or more respectful “Heavenly Qaghan,” they still were expressing a sense that the Tang rulers were active and knowledgeable participants in Inner Asian politics.

The last known burst of ideological syncretism originated again in the China-Inner Asia borderlands when the famous rebel generals, An Lushan and then Shi Siming, ruled as the Jeweled August Emperors (*zhaowu huangdi*). The newly coined title combined the classical Chinese title of emperorship (*huangdi*) with the Sogdian royal epithet, *jamuk* (*zhaowu*), meaning jewel (La Vaissière 2005, 219; Rong 2001, 150; Yuan 1998). Subsequently, as the Tang Empire became less cohesive internally and less expansive externally, borderland interactions waned. The Tang’s ideological claims regressed as emperors no longer formally claimed the Heavenly Qaghan title. Still, the idea of a Heavenly Qaghan had an allure in Inner Asia. After the An Lushan rebellion at least some of the Uighur continued to refer to Tang emperors in speech as “Heavenly Qaghans.” Tang diplomats avoided this usage, preferring the epithet, “Son of Heaven.”<sup>23</sup> The turmoil and lesser empire of the post-rebellion period apparently caused the Tang court to reject the simultaneous kingship associated with the Heavenly Qaghan title, but it remained alive in popular usage among the Uighur.

Türk and Uighur qaghans also were moving away from ideological competition during a period when raiding diminished and diplomatic cooperation increased. Turkic qaghans no longer referred to themselves as Sons (or Men!) of Heaven, thereby avoiding direct claims to simultaneous rule over China. For example, Qapaghan’s successor, Bilgä Qaghan, had a Turkic honorific epithet and regnal title of “Heaven-like, Heaven-conceived, Wise (Bilgä) Qaghan of the Türks” (*tängritäg, tängriyä bolmish bilgä Türük qaghan*) (Golden 1992, 45; Mori 1981, 73; Tekin 1968, 231, 261). The Uighur followed the same pattern in honorifics, stressing wisdom and heaven-endowed sacral kingship, and generally also including an epithet referring to bravery (Golden 1992, 45; Hamilton [1955] 1988). The only notable occurrences in this trend toward an ideological entente were at least two Tängri Qaghans (*dengli kehan*). In both cases the Tang court gave the titles to Turkic rulers via investiture, but the motive differed in each instance. The first to be granted the Tängri epithet was the last titular qaghan of the Türks, a weak child ruler with his mother serving as regent (r. 735–741). When he was invested as a vassal Tängri Qaghan in 740, the title represented an attempt to mask his vulnerable political and military situation with false glory. Tängri Qaghan’s weakness and dependency on the Tang is confirmed by a New Year’s greeting of 741 in which he referred to himself in conventionally obsequious Turko-Mongol terms as the “slave” of the Tang “Heavenly Qaghan” (XTS 215b:6056; CFYG 971:13b; Mori 1967, 208–9). Half a year later Tängri Qaghan was murdered and the ensuing internecine struggle among his

Ashina kinsmen led to the disintegration of the Second Türk Empire (ZZTJ 214:6844). Thus, for a brief period, there had been two mutually recognized Heavenly Qaghans with the Tang being accorded the superior position. In retrospect, Tängri Qaghan's regnal title, which trumpeted his association with Heaven, was especially malapropos. Under his watch, the Ashina lineage lost their long-standing claim to the Heaven-endowed sacred charisma (*qut*) to rule the Mongolian steppe.

The weakness of the last Türk qaghan is not reflected in the other confirmed case of a Tängri Qaghan, the Uighur Bögü Qaghan (r. 759–779). He was a vigorous ruler who lent vital assistance to the Tang's final suppression of the An Lushan rebellion in 762 and 763. Despite his help, Tang attitudes toward him were at best ambivalent and at worst hostile because Bögü's troops had looted Luoyang as payment for their services. In Uighur inscriptions, Bögü styled himself with a title that included the Turkic honorific epithet "heaven-conceived." In 763 Daizong recompensed Bögü Qaghan for his assistance by investing him with a title that included the Tängri Qaghan epithet (Hamilton [1955] 1988, 139; Mackerras 1973, 24–36, 76–7, 188). Although this was a sign of extreme favor, it also may have been meant to send a subtle message that Tängri and Tian were separate gods of Heaven with their own spheres of influence. The Son of Heaven ruled the Middle Kingdom while Tängri Qaghan lorded over Mongolia. Bögü Qaghan became the last Uighur to take the Tängri epithet. Later, in 769, Daizong may have made a subtle attempt to claim more authority over the Uighur when he married his foster daughter to Bögü. Daizong invested this bride with simultaneous titles of Princess (Chinese: *gongzhu*) and *qatun* (Turkic: queen) (XTS 217a:6120; ZZTJ 224:7208; Mackerras 1973, 85, n. 129; Pan 1997a, 119, 131; Wang 1999, 291, 297). The title of princess gave her a status subservient to the Tang emperor, but *qatun* was a position with potential for power, especially after the husband's death. Nonetheless, continued Tang internal weaknesses forced subsequent emperors to refrain from expansion in Inner Asia and treat the Uighur deferentially.<sup>24</sup> An age of direct ideological rivalry had ended.

The mid-ninth-century Tang court made even greater efforts to discourage a revival of the Heavenly Qaghan ideology. Emperor Wuzong and Grand Councilor Li Deyu, ruled a less expansive empire and pursued xenophobic policies that represented a reversal of early Tang openness to the outside world. After the Kirghiz extinguished the Uighur Empire in Mongolia in 840, Wuzong refused Uighur requests to become a bridle tribe in Inner Mongolia. In 842 the emperor proscribed Buddhism and other foreign religions (Dalby 1979, 664–9; Drompp 2005b). Although these policies ultimately failed to reverse the assimilation of Buddhism into China or the relevance of the borderlands to North China, they certainly reflect the narrower ideological vision of the court. When Wuzong engaged in diplomatic correspondence with the Kirghiz, he pointedly referred to his ancestor Taizong, and not himself, as the Heavenly Qaghan. Wuzong also declined the Kirghiz ruler's request to be invested as Tängri Qaghan. The Tang had become a less ambitious empire and Wuzong was encouraging the Kirghiz to do the same. However, the

desire of the Kirghiz qaghan for the Tängri Qaghan designation illustrates the continued prestige of the title on the Mongolian steppe (Drompp 2005b, 125–6, 140–1, 149–50, 288, 302). Although the first known age of simultaneous kingship in Eastern Eurasia had ebbed, Taizong's claims to be Heavenly Qaghan remained alive in historical memory in China and Inner Asia. In later times Taizong's famous example would inspire rulers of China-Inner Asia borderland dynasties to take similar titles.

## IV. Education and Ideological Exchange

Even though the identities of the propagandists responsible for devising particular regnal titles of simultaneous kingship are unknown, the ideological competition between the Sui-Tang and Turkic empires provides indirect evidence that both societies contained individuals who were capable of ideological innovation and manipulation. Moreover, sufficient examples, extant over a relatively broad chronological span, demonstrate that the Sui-Tang and Turkic courts shared a willingness to employ literate, bicultural individuals who potentially would have been capable of devising syncretic titles. The Sui and Tang encouraged multilingualism by educating foreign elites in Chinese language and literacy, and contrary to stereotypes, Turkic elites valued education.

### A. Northern Dynasties, Sui, and Tang

Bilingualism appears to have been fairly common among elites of the Northern Dynasties. Most speakers of two languages probably were of Inner Asian ancestry, but some Han officials also are known to have educated their sons in Särbi even though some others frowned on this practice (Dien 1991, 55). An excellent example of the phenomenon among the Särbi is Zhangsun Jian, a Northern Zhou official who descended in the paternal line from the Tabgach royal lineage of the Northern Wei. Around 550, while serving as a local official in Henan and dressed in military uniform, he received a Liang Dynasty ambassador from the south. Zhangsun spoke to the visitor in Särbi through a translator. However, that evening Zhangsun—dressed in civilian garb and adhering to rules of Confucian etiquette—hosted the Liang envoy at a banquet. The ambassador was shocked when Zhangsun spoke to him in fluent Chinese (ZS 26:428; Pearce et al. 2001, 16–7). It is impossible to determine the typicality of Zhangsun Jian's language abilities or propensity to speak Särbi in the military context and Chinese in the civil one. However, a great deal of circumstantial evidence suggests that the eminent northwestern lineages involved in founding the Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang were bilingual in Särbi and Chinese. Taizong and some other members of his Li lineage may have spoken Turkic too (Chen 1996a, 51–5).



Bilingualism was not limited to the eminent northwestern lineages, as demonstrated by the evidence from Tang Dynasty Xizhou (Turfan) provided in chapter 2. Another important example of bicultural local elites is the Sogdian Shi lineage that emerged in the fifth and sixth centuries in the northwestern borderlands. The family never produced a member of sufficient contemporary eminence to merit a biography in the standard histories, but their story was discovered when their tombs and accompanying epitaphs were excavated in the 1990s. Their progenitors—claimed perhaps with exaggeration as kings of the Sogdian oasis-state of Kish—migrated to Hexi in the fifth century and later settled in Yuanzhou, a borderland periphery prefecture in western Guannei, where they served the Northern Zhou and Sui dynasties in official and military positions. Shi Hedan (588–669) initially acted as a Sui local official, but defected to the Tang around 618. After a relatively brief stint working in palace horse administration, he began a forty-year career as a translator in the Secretariat of the central government (Luo 1996, 16–9, 68–72, 206–11; Zhang 2001, 257). Since translators did not receive biographies in the standard histories—presumably because of their relatively low rank (TLD 2:27b–28a)—Shi Hedan's epitaph provides the most extant information about the background of any Tang translator. Shi's post would have required a high degree of literacy in Chinese and foreign languages. Presumably he was literate in Sogdian and, given his father's military background, perhaps Sārbi and Turkic. Shi Hedan's long residence in Chang'an was conducive to retaining his bicultural orientation. He lived in a mansion in the vicinity of the Imperial City, which was his workplace, and the Western Market, which was the place of business of Sogdian and other foreign merchants. Not surprisingly, the wards next to the Western Market were the most common locations for residences of people with Sogdian surnames (Luo 1996, 68–72, 206–11; Rong 2001, 82–5; Xiong 2000, 170, 228–31). In the Chang'an Western Market, it would have been relatively easy to avoid assimilation into mainstream Han culture and continue to use Inner Asian languages.

Further evidence that the Shi lineage retained a bicultural orientation comes from the tombs of Shi Hedan and his father, located next to each other in Yuanzhou. Many elements were similar to other typical Sui-Tang official burials, including the design of the tombs, Chinese-language epitaphs, and accompanying goods such as ceramics, guardian figures, and other terracotta figurines. As mentioned in the previous chapter, tombs and accouterments, which were governed by sumptuary regulations, were a status symbol reserved for ranked officials in government. On one hand, the tomb demonstrates that the family had accepted the social standards of officialdom because people in the Sogdian homeland did not normally bury the dead. On the other hand, some aspects of the burials were unusual and probably represent a desire to preserve distinct cultural traits. Rather than being placed in coffins, which was the norm, the bodies were laid out on stone or brick platforms. This may be an indication of religious syncretism related to the Zoroastrian faith of the Sogdian homeland. Although Zoroastrians normally did not bury the dead,



they believed that the corpse had to be protected against pollution from the soil (Juliano and Lerner 2001a, 297–8, 302 n. 13; Lerner 2001, 226–7; Luo 2001). In addition, heirlooms from West Asia were among the burials items, including a Sasanian seal stone with an image of a reclining lion, a typical motif of Sasanian art, and a Pahlavi inscription with an apt admonishment for any political patron, “generosity, generosity, generosity” (Luo 1996, 14–5, 59–61, 81–2; Juliano and Lerner, eds. 2001b, 259–60, 267, 281, 288). The grave goods and platform burials probably demonstrate that the father and son continued to identify with West Asia. The Shi lineage presents an example of borderland elites serving the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang who cultivated civil, military and equestrian skills, and eclectic tastes in religion and material culture.

Over the next century, the Tang frontier system of bridge tribes encouraged the continued attraction of educated, bicultural borderland elites into governmental service. Some loyalist Turko-Mongol generals, whose biographies are preserved because they played a prominent role in the wars of the An Lushan rebellion, fit this mold. Geshu Han (d. 757) and Hun Jian (736–799) were scions of bridge tribes that had produced men serving the Tang military for a number of generations. Both mastered the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *History of the Han*. Hun Jian also was the author of a lost one-chapter work, *Xingji* (Campaign chronicles) (Chapter 6; JTS 104:3215, 134:3703–11, XTS 135:4569–74, 155:4891–5). It is not surprising that both chose to master these particular texts. As mentioned in chapter 2, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was the Confucian classic that found most favor with pragmatic bureaucrats and literate military officers because of its many accounts of political intrigue and warfare. The *History of the Han* was the most popular work of history among all sectors of the Tang elite because the Han Dynasty was believed to provide a model for the Tang to emulate (McMullen 1988, 70, 79, 163–4). The continual recruitment of literate borderland inhabitants into the government, such as Shi Hedan, Geshu Han, and Hun Jian, assured that the Tang court always had the services of men capable of manipulating the Chinese and Turko-Mongol traditions.

## B. Turko-Mongol Peoples

Contrary to the typical stereotypes of Turko-Mongols as illiterate brutes, their elites valued education and saw it as a tool for enhancing social status and power. Chinese texts composed during the early Tang present contradictory images of Turkic attitudes toward learning. One account perpetuates stereotypes of illiteracy among Türks by saying that they lacked writing and made notches on pieces of wood to keep records of taxes and troop conscription (SS 84:1864). Perhaps this was true in some cases, but another source notes that the Türks had a script resembling that of the Sogdians (ZS 50:910). Stone steles of the Second Türk Empire, dating as early as around 690, confirm that the Türks possessed a writing system with “runic” alphabet that probably was derived from Sogdian. A separate cursive script also

existed that may date to the sixth or even fifth century (Golden 1992, 151–2). Turkic elites appear to have valued literacy as a marker of status. Even on the northern periphery of the Mongolian steppe, Turkic chiefs boasted of educated lineage members in epitaphs that also expressed pride in large herds and victories in battle (Vasilyev 1991, 122–5). Education may have been relatively rare, but it appears to have been valued for its utility and prestige.

Turkic Qaghans are known to have employed Türk, Sogdian, Han, and perhaps Indian retainers who could handle scribal duties in a number of languages. The earliest surviving example of multilingualism at the Türk court is the late sixth-century Bugut stele, which has inscriptions in Sogdian on three sides and Sanskrit on the other (Yoshida and Moriyasu 1999; Kljastornyj and Livsic 1972). Sui exiles also served the qaghans in the early seventh century (ZZTJ 178:5542–3; SS 51:1332–3; Pan 1997, 104). When some court officials stereotypically told Tang Gaozu that the Türks would not understand his diplomatic letters, the emperor responded that this was untrue because many scholars had fled to the Türks during the civil war at the end of the Sui (Li 1965, 250). About a decade later, Illig Qaghan employed the “Han person” (*huaren*), Zhao Deyan, but Sogdians comprised the largest contingent of his officials (JTS 194a:5159; XTS 215a:6034; ZZTJ 192:6037). The Uighur court continued to employ Sogdians (Mackerras 1990, 324–5). Some Uighur retainers evidently had a subtle command of Chinese. For example, one Uighur qaghan demanded that the Tang court change the Uighur’s transliterated Chinese tribal name from Huihe to the more felicitous Huihu, meaning “they circled round and round (*hui*) and were light and swift like falcons (*hu*)” (Mackerras 1973, 97, 108, n. 173; Hayashi 2002, 107).

Sui and Tang policies encouraged Chinese literacy among the children of vassals, including Turko-Mongols. The Sui and Tang took sons or younger brothers of rulers as hostages. Although adult hostages usually entered the palace guard corps, younger boys served as pages at court and were taught Chinese (Zhang 1986, 97–102). The purpose of educating pages was to encourage assimilation into Han culture and loyalty to the ruling dynasty. The Turko-Mongol elite willingly sent boys to the Sui-Tang courts to serve as pages for a number of reasons. First, hostage taking was a widely accepted Eurasian customary practice of guaranteeing covenants between rulers (see chapter 6). Second, Turko-Mongol rulers recognized the benefits of education. They valued retainers who could handle diplomatic correspondence in Chinese and other languages. For example, when the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang visited the Western Türks in 630, he met a member of Ton Yabghu Qaghan’s retinue who had been educated in Chang’an and now handled diplomatic correspondence in Chinese and other unknown languages. This literate retainer also seems to have been responsible for handling relations with visiting Chinese-speaking dignitaries because he was assigned to accompany Xuanzang to the next major stop on his pilgrimage (DCES 2:29). Third, Chinese education seems to have enhanced the status of boys who served as pages. For example, Törü Apa “Father of

the Law”—the grandson of a chief from the Kirghiz region on the northern periphery of the Mongolian steppe—was dispatched to the Tang court at age of fifteen for education as a “hostage of honor” and married a “noble Chinese” woman. Later, he inherited his father’s position in the government of the Second Türk Empire as head of the interior service, and had gold, silver, fine clothing, and cattle. Judging from the tenor of the inscription, his education and cosmopolitan life burnished his reputation as much as his wealth and political power. Törü Apa was the type of person who played a pivotal role in internal and external affairs of the Second Türk Empire. His personal relationships with friends and kin in his homeland of southern Siberia linked that region to the Türk court in central Mongolia (Vasilyev 1991, 122–5). His bicultural orientation, reinforced by marriage to a Chinese woman, also equipped him to play an important role in external relations between the Türks and Tang. He and others with similar backgrounds were well-suited to serving the Türk Empire as envoys to the Tang court or propagandists devising Chinese regnal titles.

Although it is not certain that former pages devised Sino-Turkic regnal titles, there is firm evidence that they sometimes used their knowledge of the Chinese language and Tang military to undermine imperial authority. For example, Sun Wanrong was a scion of an elite Khitan lineage who had served as a page at the Tang court. When the Khitan rebelled against Empress Wu’s authority in 696, Sun used his language skills to help defeat approaching troops. After ambushing a vanguard of three cavalry brigades, the Khitan soldiers obtained the official seal of the empress’s army. Sun forged a draft dispatch and forced a captured general to rewrite it. The letter falsely claimed that the empress’s cavalry had been victorious and encouraged the infantry to advance rapidly in order to share in taking enemy heads, which were the basis for distributing rewards for merit in battle. After receiving the message, the infantry went on a forced march that exhausted the men and horses. The Khitan set another ambush that succeeded in destroying the entire army (JTS 199b:5350; XTS 219:6168; ZZTJ 205:6505–7). Soon after, a civil official submitted a memorial to Empress Wu proposing the abolishment of the practice of accepting pages because it was dangerous to provide “barbarians” with knowledge of Chinese language and the imperial system. Evidently convinced that the benefits of the policy outweighed potential drawbacks, the empress rejected his proposal. The *New Tang history* specifically links the memorial to the cases of Sun Wanrong and also Ashide Yuanzhen, one of the Türks who rebelled against the Tang to form the Second Türk Empire (XTS 112:4170–1; Zhang 1986, 101–2).<sup>25</sup> Ashide had joined Ilerish Qaghan’s revolt against Tang rule as a young man in 682. He exemplifies Türk elites who had become culturally familiar with the Tang over the previous fifty years of bridle rule, but had turned politically hostile (JTS 194a:5166–7; XTS 215a:6044). Ashide (or other Türks like him with long experience in the Tang court and borderlands) probably was responsible for devising Qapaghan Qaghan’s syncretic regnal title of 714. Despite the potential problems for the Tang, the practice of encouraging education of foreign pages continued through at least the mid-eighth century, when

a literati Confucian official, specializing in history and ritual, objected to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* being available to the “barbarians” (McMullen 1989, 94–5).

## Conclusion

Sui-Tang conceptions of imperial space and rulership exhibit strong affinities with those of contemporary Turko-Mongol peoples, and to varying degrees with others throughout Eurasia. In greater Eurasia, peripheries of polities were conceived similarly as zones of gradually diminishing power where political organization entailed forming hierarchical political bonds between a monarch and subordinate vassals. Consequently, political actors throughout Eurasia widely recognized the need to negotiate some form of hierarchical patron-outer client relationship with both parties agreeing to occupy a “proper place.” The negotiations involved in forming these bonds will be discussed in part III of this book.

Universal kingship was common throughout Eurasia, but in the more restricted region of Eastern Eurasia, ancestor and Heaven worship formed a basic foundation of religious belief and dual pillars of political legitimization ideology. Sui-Tang emperors and Turkic qaghans practiced somewhat analogous rituals that were meant to demonstrate that they had received the approbation of an all-encompassing Heaven deity and their personal ancestors. Tibet shared in these ideas too.<sup>26</sup> These affinities demonstrate that some important political ideas were shared more broadly in Eastern Eurasia than the conventional Sinic zone of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Ironically, Japan was a relative latecomer (Piggott 1997, 79–92). The origins of these common beliefs are outside of the scope of this book, but their existence may be the result of long-term cultural entanglements and not just unidirectional cultural diffusion from China.

Interstate ideological competition provides evidence that an interchange of political ideas was ongoing in medieval Eastern Eurasia. The period from approximately 580 to 750 appears to have been a high point in ideological exchange and innovation. The burgeoning Türk and Sui-Tang empires made claims of simultaneous, Heaven-mandated rulership over pastoral nomadic and farming people. The Türk monarch, Ishbara Qaghan, issued the first known salvo in the battle of ideas in the late sixth century. The intercultural weaving of Ishbara’s title, which we might imagine as a Turkic warp and Chinese weft, established a potential model for later creations, including most famously, Tang Taizong’s Heavenly Qaghan. The simultaneous titles drew from a shared repertoire of ideas, but each was a unique coinage that distinguished a ruler from his competitors. Syncretism of political ideals can be considered a characteristic of Eastern Eurasian diplomacy that parallels the more widely noted phenomenon of religious syncretism in the region.

Although the authors of these regnal titles are not known, ideological competition evidently was made possible by the existence of highly literate, bicultural people

who entered the service of rulers in North China and the steppe. The discussion in this chapter has alluded in passing to four major reasons for this phenomenon. One—the only one of these four points that is conventionally noted—is the legacy of Sārbi conquest and rule over North China in the two centuries prior to the establishment of the Sui Dynasty. The Sui and Tang dynastic founders emerged out of the literate and multicultural ruling group of the Northern Zhou, and continued many of their traditions. Taizong, or more broadly the early Tang imperial family, conventionally is considered to exemplify this trend (Chen 2001, 183–9; Barfield 1989, 140; Chen 1996b; Pan 1997, 180–3; Wright 1976). Two, was the existence of bicultural local elites who inhabited the China-Inner Asia borderlands for generations. Some borderland elites, such as the Sogdian Shi lineage, educated their sons in Chinese and other languages, but did not identify themselves as Han. Moreover, the experiences of the warlords, Liu Wuzhou and Liang Shidu, demonstrate that ostensibly Han borderland inhabitants could manipulate Confucian and Turkic cultural symbols with equal facility. Three, Turko-Mongol elites placed a high value on literacy for its utilitarian advantages and status prestige. By the seventh century, Turkic appears to have supplanted Sogdian as the primary administrative language, but some Turko-Mongol boys also were learning Chinese. The Sui and Tang courts provided education as part of a “civilizing mission.” Those who argue that Chinese literacy was a sign of assimilation or sinicization (*hanhua*) (Zhang 1986, 370–2), overlook that Turko-Mongol rulers valued Chinese literacy as a source of potential political and military advantage. Four, was politically-driven elite circulation between North China and Inner Asia in the sixth through eighth centuries, as educated men sought patrons and/or the losers of power struggles sought asylum. Türk rulers accepted educated Sogdians, Han, and probably Sārbi into their service. Likewise, Turko-Mongols fled to the Sui and Tang empires. Further aspects of cultural exchange that were the products of these four factors will be explored in subsequent chapters.

## Diplomacy as Eurasian Ritual

Interstate relationships in Eastern Eurasia were lubricated in part by the common repertoire of cosmological and spatial concepts mentioned in the previous chapter, and in part by uniformities in customary diplomatic rituals. All cultures have rituals at the elite and popular levels, which can be defined as “socially standardized and repetitive symbolic behavior” that structures “our sense of reality and our perception of the world” (Rawski 1998, 197). Medieval Eurasian monarchs believed diplomatic rituals served a functionalist purpose—in the words of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII (913–959)—making “the imperial power seem more awesome to its subjects and at the same time seem more agreeable and more impressive” (Cameron 1987, 118). Rulers magnified their power in part by forcing a participant in an audience to “surrender his own autonomy of action and speech and become himself an element of ritual” (Canepa 2009, 145). However, monarchs also modified state ceremonies to navigate political exigencies and accommodate the expectations of their audiences, comfortably following the dictum of Tang Taizong that “Ritual follows the feelings of man; what question is there of it being unvarying?” (JTS 24:912; McMullen 1987, 220). Court ceremonies complemented diplomacy and empire building, which by nature were arenas of cross-cultural contact, because rituals are “ambiguous and multivalent” creating different meanings in the minds of those in attendance (Rawski 1998, 197; Wilentz, ed. 1985, 4–5). This chapter will carefully decode Sui-Tang, Turko-Mongol and some other Eurasian diplomatic rituals to demonstrate that ostensibly insignificant details in ceremonies often had glaring implications for sophisticated witnesses.

In particular, the chapter will emphasize entanglements between Confucian rituals of interstate relations and those of Eurasia. Beginning with Fairbank’s seminal work on the Chinese world order, most studies of imperial Chinese diplomacy follow the assumption of traditional Confucians, that their rites had indigenous origins isolated from Eurasian practices, and that one purpose of ritual was to provide “Chinese with a standard to distinguish themselves from non-Chinese” (McDermott, ed. 1999, 1; Fairbank 1968, 4–11; Franke 1983, 140–1; McMullen 1987, 182–3; Tao 1988, 3–6). If this is the case, why did foreigners comfortably participate in



Confucian diplomatic rituals throughout the ages? And why did external conquest dynasties adopt Confucian rituals for foreign guests? One potential explanation comes from historians of the Qing Dynasty who argue that simultaneous kingship is the answer. Confucian, Tibeto-Buddhist, and Manchu rituals were targeted to different ethnic constituencies in the empire. Confucian rituals were carried out to satisfy the Han component of the realm (Crossley 1999; Hevia 1995, 29–36; Millward 1998, 194–202; Rawski 1998, 198–200, 297–300). Applying this rationale to the Sui and Tang would imply that court rituals for foreign dignitaries mainly originated in China and were meant for domestic consumption.

The evidence from medieval Eurasia leads to a different answer. Previous research has demonstrated that diplomatic immunity for ambassadors was widely shared (Sinor 1989), but the parallels were more pervasive. Sui-Tang diplomatic rituals incorporated patrimonial elements—pageantry, status ranking, displays of obeisance, gift exchanges, and feasting—that were idioms of diplomatic intercourse familiar to ambassadors from Europe to Japan. Modern scholars of China commonly have assumed that these uniform elements of Eurasian ritual had origins and target audiences mainly among Sinic peoples. The perception of Chinese exceptionalism in foreign relations is partly due to the existence of an extensive textual record. Compared to the rest of medieval Eurasia, where praxis in interstate relations was mainly customary, Chinese dynasties were unusual in possessing institutionalized and codified procedures that were based upon earlier precedents.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the perspectives of Confucian ritualists—who assumed that their ritual tradition extended unbroken back to antiquity and that the Türks “lack ritual protocol, just like the ancient Xiongnu” (ZS 50:909; BS 99:3287)—has tended to drown out the voices of other historical actors. Although information about Inner Asian diplomatic rituals is relatively sketchy, sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol diplomatic ceremonies had an entangled relationship with each other and the rest of Eurasia. In particular, the Sui through mid-Tang was a high point of the Inner Asian impact on China.

## I. Rituals of Diplomacy

### A. Tang Ritual Prescriptions

Tang rituals involving external relations, which are better documented than those of contemporary Turko-Mongol polities and the preceding Sui Dynasty, will be treated first to create a basis for comparison. Tang prescriptive canons for diplomatic rituals are preserved in the *Da Tang Kaiyuan li* (Kaiyuan ritual code of the great Tang) (TKYL 79:1a–80:7b; McMullen 1987). In addition, scattered references to numerous diplomatic visits can be gleaned from a variety of sources (Wang 2005, 86–136). Institutionalization and codification can be considered distinctively Chinese characteristics of Eurasian diplomatic protocol.



Two Tang governmental agencies coordinated the reception of foreign embassies. One was the Office of Visitor Protocol (*dianke shu*) under the Court of State Ceremonial and the other was the Bureau of Visitor Reception (*zhuke si*) under the Ministry of Rites. The agencies had overlapping duties, but significantly both were concerned with ritual (TLD 4:55b–57a, 18:13a–17b; XTS 46:1195–6, 48:1257–8; Rotours 1974, 92–6, 408–15; Wang 2005, 111).<sup>2</sup> A major function of these offices was to oversee ceremonies involving foreign rulers and envoys according to the prescriptions of the “Guest Rites” (*binli*) in the *Kaiyuan ritual code* (TLD 4:11a; Wang 2005, 120). Aside from rituals, both agencies had mundane responsibilities related to ranking, housing, feeding, rewarding, and entertaining the visitors. The strong patrimonial tendencies of Confucian diplomacy are revealed in bureaucratic and ritual terminology that euphemistically allude to envoys as “visitors” (*ke*) or “guests” (*bin*). Even more significantly, the single character *ke* and the combination *binke* are expressions commonly referring to a patron’s clients (chapter 3, note 3).<sup>3</sup> The usage of the terms *bin* and *ke* in diplomacy reinforces the impression that Confucian ideology included the notion of visiting dignitaries as submissive outer clients of a patrimonial imperial household.

A combination of caution, hospitality, and status ranking infused Tang patrimonial-bureaucratic treatment of foreign envoys. Diplomats were handled with circumspection. According to a Tang administrative ordinance, foreign envoys (*fanke*) were required to be isolated from the general populace and government officials without pertinent business, most probably to reduce their ability to gather intelligence or engage in subversion.<sup>4</sup> Upon arrival at the frontier, the ambassadorial mission needed to obtain a travel document, detailing the number of persons in their party, which would provide safe conduct to the capital (XTS 46:1196; Rotours 1974, 93). The experiences of Japanese missions—which are relatively well documented because they kept accounts of their journeys—demonstrate that envoys and their retinues were detained comfortably and provided with lodging at prefectural seats near their points of entry. Meanwhile prefectural authorities notified the Tang court and awaited instructions. In the case of the Japanese mission of 834, the reply arrived after two and a half months, and the travel document only allowed 35 of the 305 people participating in the mission to proceed to the capital (Wang 2005, 99–102).

The status ranking of the home polity would determine the exact level of a mission’s treatment. This was in keeping with the classical Confucian view that “distinctions of status were an essential feature of ritual” (McMullen 1987, 216). Chiefs of bridle tribes, who had received appointments as Tang provincial officials, had the same privileges as any other Tang official of the same rank. Envoys, who lacked Tang official rank because their polities were not engaged in bridle relationships with the Tang, were classified as one of five grades based on their country’s “reputation among the foreigners” (*fanwang*) (XTS 48:1257; Rotours 1974, 409; Wang 2005, 117). Like regular Tang officials on business, diplomats were allowed to use the

governmental transportation system, which included horse and cart relay services, and boat travel via canals. Inner Asian diplomats mainly would have taken land transportation with the number of mounts or carts determined by the status rank of the head of the party (TLD 5:32b–34a, 8:14a–b; XTS 46:1198; TLYS 10:210–1, art. 125, 127; Rotours 1974, 110–2). The Tang also provided room and board to the “guests” at governmental hostels along the route. On the return journey, they were furnished with provisions to last until they reached home (XTS 46:1196; THY 100:1798; Rotours 1974, 93–4). The actual implementation of these privileges for diplomatic travelers is proven by the Japanese evidence (Wang 2005, 99–102) and excavated documents that show envoys using government horses and donkeys and being supplied with fodder.<sup>5</sup> At the capital, room and board were furnished to the diplomats. Their ranks determined the quality of provisions and lodging. Diplomats of the fifth rank and above attended Tang court audiences every four days and lunched with regular Tang officials of the same high standing (TLD 4:54b; XTS 46:1196; Rotours 1974, 94–5; Wang 2005, 114–5, 118–20). The entire embassy was treated to state banquets upon arrival and departure from the capital with status determining the seating arrangements. The feasting often was accompanied by lavish entertainment (Wang 2005, 103, 115, 129–30; Benn 2002, 132–6). Ideally, the food and shelter provided to diplomatic travelers was meant to impress them with the wealth and generosity of the patrimonial emperor. However, in the post-rebellion era when government finances were weaker, there are reports that visitors did not find their provisions to be adequate (Wang 2005, 276, n. 72).

Travel on the official transport system and lodging in the capital manifested patrimonial hospitality, but also allowed Tang officials to monitor and control the movements of the diplomats. The impulse to “watch out for the foreign guests” is still part of modern China’s political culture (Schell 1980). While in Tang Chang’an, diplomats had to request permission to go outside of their hostels for any purpose, including buying and selling goods (Wang 2005, 111–3). In addition to monitoring emissaries, officials of the Court of State Ceremonial were supposed to gather intelligence by questioning visiting embassies about the terrain and customs of their homelands. Based on the information, artisans created maps that were forwarded to the emperor and Bureau of Operations in the Ministry of War. Artists also made paintings of foreigners (XTS 46:1198; TLD 5:30b–31b; Rotours 1974, 109–10). Although literati Confucians, such as the Song Dynasty authors of the *New Tang history*, viewed embassies as a burdensome expense (XTS 221b:6264), ideally the visit benefitted the Tang government by putting envoys in awe of the emperor’s wealth and generosity, providing intelligence, and creating a forum for negotiations.

All diplomats were privileged guests of the patrimonial Tang emperor who provided for them according to status. How was status determined for ritual purposes at the court? The criterion of reputation, mentioned in bureaucratic regulations, is a vague indicator of prestige. Wang Zhenping argues that several factors determined status, such as acceptance of Chinese civilization, chronological precedence in

acknowledging Tang rule, and strategic concerns (Wang 2005, 117–9). Although literati Confucians may have paid lip service to the former two factors, the latter likely played the major role in decision making at court. Probably the best indicators of the status of a polity in the eyes of the Tang court were the official ranks of bridge rulers and the numbers of men allowed on a mission to the Tang court. The size of missions is seldom revealed in the sources, but the few surviving records indicate that only strategically important allies were permitted to travel in large numbers to the capital. For example, the 35 out of 305 Japanese on the mission of 834, mentioned above, pales in comparison to the contingent of several thousand Tiele chiefs who, after assisting in the defeat of the Sir-Tardush in Mongolia, were granted passage to the court to proclaim Taizong the Heavenly Qaghan in late 646 (chapter 4). Japan was a relatively isolated island country, while the Mongolian plateau, which the Tiele controlled, generally was a preeminent foreign policy concern of any China-based dynasty. Despite Japan's acceptance of Buddhism and Confucian high culture, and the fact that the most recent visit had come more than thirty years earlier, diplomacy with Japan mainly had symbolic importance, and thus was relatively restricted.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes status ranking involved much finer degrees of calibration. For example, the Khitan and Türgish early in the reign of Xuanzong were medium-sized nomadic powers with strategic importance to the Tang, but the former rated higher than the latter. The Khitan in Manchuria occupied an intermediate position between the Tang and Türks in Mongolia. In 716, when the Khitan broke with the Türks and united with the Tang, the Khitan ruler was granted the second-highest Tang noble title of Commandery Prince (CFYG 974:20b; JTS 199b:5351; XTS 219:6170; ZZTJ 211:6720; des Rotours 1974, 43). In February of 720, in preparation for an attack on the Türks, 354 Khitan were allowed to go to the capital to receive rich rewards (chapter 8). The Türgish with a base in the Ili River region were much farther from the Chinese heartland, but occupied an important place in Inner Asian geopolitics, bordering the Türks to the northeast, Tang to the east, Arabs to the west, and Tibet to the south. The Tang and Türgish engaged in hostilities in 717, but agreed on peaceful diplomatic relations in 718. The Türgish qaghan was invested with a noble title of Duke of State, which was one rank lower than the Khitan king (chapter 6). In 722 during negotiations over a possible marriage alliance, to be discussed in chapter 7, the Türgish sent eight emissaries to the court (CFYG 975:1a). The cases of the Khitan and Türgish reinforce the conclusion that strategic value determined ritual status rank. The Khitan were cooperating militarily with the Tang against a major enemy, while the Türgish and Tang had reached a truce after a period of hostility. The Khitan ruler was rewarded with a higher title and greater numbers of envoys in the Tang capital. Status ranking in guest rituals highlighted the power, centrality, and sacredness of the emperor, while theoretically enticing foreign envoys to compete for his favor. Part III of the book will further amplify the importance of power and negotiations in determining status rank.

A distinctive feature of the prescribed Confucian ceremonies for visiting kings and envoys was the distancing of the emperor from contact with them. During the Tang Empire, all communication theoretically occurred through the intermediation of bureaucrats. For example, when the diplomats arrived on the outskirts of the capital, Tang officials, acting on behalf of the emperor, delivered an imperial edict of greeting, treated the emissaries to a banquet, and bestowed gifts to demonstrate appreciation for “having completed a long arduous journey” (Wang 2005, 103). The value of rewards varied according to the ranks of the recipients (JTS 195:5201; Mackerras 1973, 66). When the emperor held an audience for the envoys, they were arrayed in the courtyard with standing positions determined by status. Monumental architecture, such as an audience hall built on a natural hillock fifteen meters high, elevated the emperor physically and metaphorically, so that he towered above the assembled diplomats (Wang 2005, 126; Xiong 2000, 59–60, 83–5). The ambassadors presented their petitions and tribute products to officials of the Secretariat, who gave the goods to other departments for cataloging. Tribute could not exceed the value of the emperor’s gifts, thus asserting the emperor’s magnanimity. Tang officials ascended the western staircase to present the petitions to the emperor, escorted the diplomats from the courtyard to a seat in the audience hall, and continued to handle communication between the emperor and visitors. At various points in the ceremonies, body language also asserted the superiority of the emperor. Tang officials and imperial guardsmen stood in grand phalanxes, moving weapons in unison on cue, symbolizing the ruler’s ability to mobilize the manpower of the empire. Envoys were required to pay obeisance to the emperor by kneeling or prostrating in kowtows to receive his edicts and pay respect to his distant presence. A band of musicians playing music lent a solemn grandeur to the occasion (TKYL 79:3a–7a; TLD 9:13a, 22a; XTS 47:1211–2; Rotours 1974, 180, 188; Wang 2005, 129–33). The array of officials, guards, and envoys in the courtyard symbolically represented a mapping of the world, with the Tang emperor towering above all in attendance. His height symbolized his sacral powers as the intermediary between Heaven and those assembled below. The displays of obeisance and use of bureaucratic intermediaries to send and receive gifts and written messages enhanced the emperor’s status as someone who was greater than ordinary men.

For officials of the Court of State Ceremonial, educating diplomatic envoys about Tang court protocol was one of their primary duties (Wang 2005, 120). Violations of ritual etiquette were taken seriously. Two incidents involving a new Eurasian power, the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate (Dashiguo), demonstrate this point. In 713 an Umayyad emissary did not kowtow during his audience at court. The court officials “exposed his crime,” but Xuanzong benevolently pardoned him because he did not understand “civilized” customs. However, when an Umayyad emissary came a few years later and stated more boldly, “in my native country we only bow down in worship to god; even if we have an audience with a king, we do not have a law requiring us to prostrate before him,” the officials harshly rebuked him until he kowtowed

(JTS 198:5316; XTS 221b:6262–3). It was deemed proper for the officials to use harsh measures against a diplomat who violated etiquette.

Tang emperors did not necessarily carry out the scripted versions of guest rituals perfunctorily, and purposeful variations could send diplomatic signals. When the Türgish ruler, Sulu, requested Tang investiture as qaghan and marriage to a princess in 717, Xuanzong politely declined by refusing to accept a Türgish envoy's tribute of horses. In keeping with diplomatic decorum, the emperor's edict praised Türgish sincerity in procuring the horses and enduring hardships to travel to the court (CFYG 971:2b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 33–4). Behind the scenes, the Tang court and border generals were involved in a debate about whether to attack or appease Sulu (chapter 6). The rejection of Türgish horses sent an indirect signal that the court was not willing to consider his appointment.

## B. The Tang “Political Family”

The prescribed Tang Confucian “Guest Rites” tended to depersonalize the emperor by making him less accessible and more reliant on bureaucratic intermediaries. Likewise, foreign dignitaries seemingly were marginalized in the codified ceremonies, reflecting their low prestige in the eyes of Confucian ritual experts. Of the five sections of the Tang's ritual code, the one on “Guest Rites” was the shortest by far, comprising only 6 of 150 total state ceremonies (TLD 4:9a–14b; McMullen 1989, 84–5). Kept distant from the envoys and forced to work through government officials, the rituals ostensibly prevented a ruler from using personal charisma to motivate men, thus reducing his patrimonial authority, while enhancing the power of the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, ceremonies tended to include Turko-Mongols and other peoples through the mid-Tang because the code incorporated patrimonial and inclusive elements, and monarchs exercised their prerogative to implement more personal forms of rule.

### *1. Inclusiveness of Domestic Rites*

Foreigners were incorporated into many “domestic” rituals. For example, the spectators and participants in the major auspicious rites of sacral kingship—suburban sacrifices to Heaven and ancestors—included “barbarian visitors” along with important constituencies that included imperial lineage members, ranked civil and military officials, and capital guardsmen. Turko-Mongol bridle officials and hostages in the capital were not considered diplomatic visitors, and consequently would have been intermixed among the ranked military officers and guard corps members. Like diplomatic ceremonies, domestic rituals also involved patrimonial pageantry, including music and dance, meant to elevate the status of the emperor (Wechsler 1985, 117). For example, standing positions and garments colors, prescribed according to official rank, created a visually impressive display of orderly

patterns among the spectators. The shades transitioned from the emperor in yellow ochre at the center of attention, to purple at the inner layer of high officials, to red, green, and then the black of low-ranking officials on the outside (XTS 24:527; Liu 1996, 64–5). On more somber occasions, such as the visits of emperors to the tombs of their fathers, the same groups of spectators were supposed to participate, including ranked bridle officials and foreign envoys. The ceremonial display would have been more subdued, but the monumental tombs in the background, rich animal sacrifices, and large audience still would have impressed participants (TKYL 4:3a, 37:3a–b, 45:1a–3a; Wechsler 1985, 134, 148).

Although the ritual code made foreigners and bridle officials an integral part of the empire, blurring the line between domestic and diplomatic ceremonies, there are signs that this situation began to be reversed after the An Lushan rebellion. Literati Confucians gained more influence over foreign policy and ritual during a period when “barbarians” were scapegoated for the dynasty’s weak control over the provinces. For example, in 779 during the “Revealing of the Coffin” rite of Daizong’s funeral, all of the elite constituencies expected to attend major rituals were present at the Taiji Palace. However, the groups whom literati Confucians viewed with suspicion, foreign dignitaries and Buddhist and Daoist monks, were relegated to low-status positions outside the main southern gate of the palace (McMullen 1999, 183–4). This was the equivalent of standing in the lobby during a theater performance. By the late eighth century, Confucian ritualists evidently were having success in downgrading the status of their perceived competitors and pushing them out of the political family.

## 2. Imperial Prerogative and Propaganda

Early Tang emperors also reduced the prescribed distance between ambassadors and emperors through the exercise of imperial prerogative. At times they held direct discussions with diplomats at audiences (JTS 196a:5231). For example, in 641, Taizong questioned the Tibetan envoy Mgar Ston rtsan (Ludongzan), who was at court to escort a Tang princess being sent to marry the Tibetan ruler. The emperor valued the ambassador’s superior rhetorical skills and offered to arrange a marriage for him with an imperial clanswoman, but Mgar declined, displaying propriety, because his king had not received his bride yet and Mgar already had a wife betrothed by his parents.<sup>7</sup> The anecdote portrays Taizong as a hands-on, patriarchal ruler who solicitously sought to make worthy foreigners part of his extended family and empire.

Taizong apparently sought to promote this patrimonial aspect of his image because he commissioned the painting of a hand scroll, *The Imperial Sedan Chair*, (Fig. 5.1) memorializing the occasion.<sup>8</sup> The bearded Mgar and his retainers stand facing the emperor, observing proper etiquette, in deferential postures, slightly hunched forward with hands clasped. Taizong is depicted fancifully seated on a





Figure 5.1. The Imperial Sedan Chair

sedan chair and surrounded by beautiful female attendants with some holding the chair and others fanning and shading him. The sizes of the figures in the painting are proportional to their political power. Taizong is the largest, followed by Mgar and then his retainers, and finally the relatively small female servants (Barnhart et al. 1997, 60–1). Based on body sizes, the status of an eminent foreigner, like Mgar, was greater than a Han servant, but Taizong lorded over everyone. The proportions of the figures implied that social status trumped ethnicity as a determinant of political eminence in the Tang realm. The propriety that Mgar observed in his language and posture signified that foreigners were capable of learning ritual protocols, and worthy of inclusion in the empire. Taizong wanted the viewers of the painting—most likely restricted to imperial lineage members and high officials and officers—to see him as superior to his foreign guests, yet treating the visitors personally and benevolently.

Tang emperors later created more public displays of sculpture at imperial tombs that emphasized the physical and ritual inclusion of foreigners in the empire. During Taizong's funeral in 649, Gaozong exercised imperial prerogative by ordering sculptors to fashion statues of fourteen "barbarian monarchs and chiefs" who had been captured in battle or "voluntarily submitted" to his deceased father. The statues were placed inside the north gate of Taizong's tomb complex. Their identities were recorded in a received source, and the recent discovery of three inscribed pedestals partially confirms the written record. Most are Inner Asians, including Turko-Mongol tribal leaders and kings of oasis states.<sup>9</sup> The inclusion of statues of foreigners was an innovation in imperial tomb design, which previously had only incorporated sculptures of real and mythical animals and civil and military officials (Paludan 1991, 117–20).



Subsequently, “barbarian” sculptures were added to the Qianling, the tomb complex of Gaozong and Empress Wu, after her death in 705. Zhongzong apparently decided to add sixty-four life-size statues of foreign elites in two orderly contingents flanking the processional path leading to the main southern gate of the tumulus (Chen 1980; Eckfeld 2005, 24–5; Wang and Fan 2005, 19–21) (Fig. 5.2). Sixty-one headless sculptures survive, but although each statue originally had a name and title engraved on it, only thirty-six still can be identified (Chen 1980). The inclusion of the statues has been the subject of much debate, including speculation that is related to the Turkic practice of placing a line of stones at a warrior’s tomb representing slain enemies (Beckwith 1984, 33–4; Cen 1958, 140–2). Based on the identities of the individuals represented in stone, none were foreigners killed in battle and only a few were war captives. Figuratively, they might be considered mourners, but not literally because some of the individuals predeceased Taizong, Gaozong, and/or Empress Wu, or had never visited the Tang court. Although the majority of the statues depict Inner Asians and especially Turko-Mongol peoples, the only common denominator is that they represent foreigners or elites of foreign ancestry, including loyal military officers, bridle officials, rulers who had accepted Tang investiture, and ambassadors from the independent Tibetan and the Second Türk Empires (Chen 1980; Zhang 1990, 89–92). Spiritually, the statues were an innovation in keeping with neither Turkic nor Chinese custom. The exact sacral



Figure 5.2. Statues of “Barbarian Monarchs and Chiefs” at Qianling

significance remains a mystery. Politically, it was propaganda with varying degrees of relationship to reality. One premodern source plausibly clarifies the secular purpose of both sets of statues when it says that Taizong's were supposed to "explain and propagate [his] . . . magnificent achievements" and in particular "manifest [his] martial merit" (THY 20:395–6). In this light Canepa (2010b, 129–30) may be correct to connect these statues to a parallel tendency of Byzantine and Sasanian rulers to glorify themselves with monumental depictions of defeated and submissive foreign monarchs. The only possible audience for the statues were Tang officials, imperial lineage members, and foreign diplomats attending rituals at the tombs, because the imperial tomb complexes were surrounded by walls and monitored by guards (Eckfeld 2005, 19–23, 96). The dignified and respectful poses of the figures project a visual message similar to *The Imperial Sedan Chair*: foreign elites were subjects of the Tang emperors, but were an important constituency of the empire, reverently supporting the emperor in this life and the next one (Chen 1980, 190). Abramson (2008, 91) notes that this was an inclusive "imperial vision" meant to counter the "exclusivist vision" of those who favored demeaning depictions of foreigners.

### 3. *Feng and Shan Rites: A Case Study*

Tang emperors sought to break through the solemn formalism of Confucian rituals on an even grander scale. An outstanding example is the Feng and Shan rites, which reduced the distance between the emperor, officials, foreign dignitaries, and the public at large. Some Confucian ritual specialists considered Feng and Shan to be the most august rite because it was conducted at the sacred Mount Tai in Shandong only six times in imperial Chinese history, including once each by Tang emperors Gaozong (in 666) and Xuanzong (in 725).<sup>10</sup> Empress Wu carried out a seventh performance at the sacred Mount Song near her capital of Luoyang in 695. The preconditions for the Feng and Shan rites explain its rarity, requiring prosperity internally, peace externally, auspicious omens, and a ruler of supreme confidence. Under Qin Shihuangdi (r. 221–210 BCE) and Han Wudi (r. 141–87 BCE) it originated as a relatively private and non-Confucian mystical ceremony concerned with the attainment of immortality, but by the latter half of the Han Dynasty it had been reinterpreted as Confucian sacrifices thanking Heaven and Earth for their blessings. The ritual consisted of three offerings, beginning with a sacrifice to Heaven at the base of the mountain, followed by the Feng rite on the mountaintop involving an announcement to Heaven written on jade slips, and ending with the Shan sacrifice to the god of Earth at the base of the mountain. Although Tang Confucians intended the Feng and Shan rites to be a dignified display of sacral kingship, the prelude and aftermath were strongly infused with patrimonial elements, including grand touring, hunts, and feasts (Lewis 1999a, 65–8; McMullen 1988, 128–31; Wechsler 1985, 170–94). The several months of a ritual progress created a public spectacle that allowed Tang

emperors to present a more personal face to their officials, subjects, and the outside world.

The imperial progressions to and from Mount Tai would have made an impressive case for the wealth and benevolence of Gaozong and Xuanzong. Royal tours of inspection were an ancient ritual in China and throughout Eurasia, one of “the ceremonial forms by which kings take symbolic possession of their realm” (Geertz 1985, 16). Progressions occurred in centralized monarchies, like the Tang, but were even more common in decentralized patrimonial and feudal polities, and especially Turko-Mongol ones, where kings needed to monitor relatively independent subordinates in outlying areas (Allsen 2006, 186–7). Progressions had propaganda value because the grandeur of the royal retinue was meant to awe participants and observers, especially common people who normally did not have contact with the political elite. Imperial inspection tours in China had precedents going back to the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Dynamic emperors tended to be especially eager to hit the road. During the Tang, it was another one of the state rituals that specifically prescribed the inclusion of “barbarian guests.” Despite the classical approbation of imperial tours, Confucian moralists generally discouraged the emperor from traveling because the logistical requirements of huge entourages could cause economic hardship in rural areas (TKYL 62:2a; Michael G. Chang 2007, 34–71; Wechsler 1985, 161–9). However, literati were more willing to support touring that was associated with the sacred Feng and Shan rites because it was a highly valued ritual (McMullen 1988, 129–30). On the rare occasions when Feng and Shan rites took place, there was a convergence of the interests of monarchs and ministers that encouraged imperial travel.

The Feng and Shan ceremonies involved probably the broadest constituencies of spectators and participants of any Tang ritual performance. In addition to the usual audience for capital rituals—members of the imperial lineage, foreign rulers and diplomats, and civil and military officials of the central government—others who were invited to attend included all high-ranking local officials, noted scholars, and commoners with special talents. During Gaozong’s ceremony there was even an unprecedented inclusion of female participants with Empress Wu and other harem women replacing male ritual specialists in making sacrifices to the feminine Earth god. Some literati Confucians were dismayed by this development and it was removed when Xuanzong later performed the rites. Gaozong and Xuanzong’s guests represented a broad array of “opinion makers” of the empire and neighboring lands who would be expected to recount tales of Tang grandeur to others. For example, Tang literati Confucians who attended Xuanzong’s Feng and Shan rites treated it as one of the greatest achievements of the dynasty and a source of personal pride. The large audiences represented a complete change from the secretive ceremonies of the Qin and early Han dynasties (Lewis 1999a, 65–8; McMullen 1988, 130–1; Wechsler 1985, 170–94).

Foreign affairs played an important role in planning the Feng and Shan rites because external peace was one of the preconditions for the implementation of the

ceremony, and foreign “guests” lent symbolic prestige to the gathering. The ceremony of 666 included representatives of the Türks, Silla, Paekche, Koguryō, Japan, India, Khmer, Khotan, and the exiled Persian court (CFYG 36:2a). For the Türks in attendance in 666, the Feng and Shan rites represented the most important ritual display of Tang dominance in external affairs since Taizong’s gathering to be re-proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan two decades earlier. As a result of Taizong and Gaozong’s campaigns, independent qaghans no longer existed in Mongolia or elsewhere in Eastern Eurasia. As the Türks stood among the splendidly arrayed witnesses at the base of Mount Tai and watched Gaozong sacrifice to Heaven, it is easy to imagine them thinking that the Heaven-mandated *qut* to rule had transferred from their Ashina lineage to the Heavenly Qaghans of the Tang House. The ensuing six decades until Xuanzong’s Feng and Shan ritual brought great turbulence to foreign affairs. To Turko-Mongol participants, the sacred aspects of the ceremony of 725 would have resonated less powerfully than those of the rites of 666. Although by 725 the Tang had reached *modus vivendi* with the neighboring powers of Tibet, the Türgish, Khitan, and Qay, a performance of the Feng and Shan rites seemed less appropriate because Bilgä Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire was resisting Tang investiture and claiming that he possessed the heaven-endowed *qut* (Golden 1982, 45; Mori 1981, 73; Tekin 1968, 231, 261). Recognizing that the Türks had to be contained to perform the Feng and Shan rites, Grand Councilor Zhang Yue, advised Xuanzong to increase border defenses to prevent an attack when the court was away from the capital. In response, a high official in the Ministry of War argued that it was not appropriate “to show fear of barbarians” because the purpose of the Feng and Shan rites was to announce achievements to Heaven. Instead, he proposed a stratagem to neutralize the Türks by taking advantage of their interest in marital relations with the Tang. He suggested inviting the Türks to send “important officials” to engage in marriage negotiations and participate in the Feng-Shan ceremony. The emperor and Zhang Yue agreed that this was an excellent idea (JTS 194a:5175; XTS 215b:6053–4; ZZTJ 212:6764–5).

Aside from the Türks, the foreign guests of the greatest strategic import were the bride rulers of the Khitan and Qay, and an envoy from the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate. The small or distant powers included various Korean and Manchurian states, Japan, India and other distant polities (JTS 23:900). Tibet and the Türgish were noticeably absent, perhaps auguries of hostilities that would break out in 726. The case of the Türgish qaghan Sulu, who had accepted investiture as a Tang client, represents a striking example of Tang use of the Feng and Shan ceremony to send veiled threats. As will be described in the next chapter, two of the invited “foreign guests” were Sulu’s avowed enemies. One was the Umayyad Caliphate, which had come into conflict with the Türgish because of their expansion eastward from Iran into Sogdia. The other was the Western Türks, who were categorized as “foreign guests” even though their qaghan of the royal Ashina line was living in exile in Chang’an. The inclusion of the Western Türks may have been a warning that Xuanzong was

willing to renew efforts to forcibly replace Sulu, who was of a less elite lineage, with a royal Ashina. The absence of Türgish envoys may indicate an intentional Tang snub or Sulu's displeasure at the inclusion of the Umayyad Muslims and Western Türks. Both sides had plausible motives to use the occasion to express rancor obliquely. Given all of these foreign policy complications, Xuanzong had a weaker claim than Gaozong to perform the Feng and Shan rites.

The enormous mobile retinues of Gaozong and Xuanzong created majestic spectacles. Their camps filled the plain with people and animals for several tens of *li*, or about ten to twenty kilometers. The supply trains supposedly stretched for several hundred *li*, or one hundred to two hundred kilometers. In 666, the foreign leaders and envoys are described as bringing large entourages driving cattle, sheep, camels and horses that clogged the road. In 725, Xuanzong praised his personal slave and close client, the Koguryan Wang Maozhong, for glorifying his progression. In his capacity as head of the Tang horse system, Wang had supplied several tens of thousands of horses that were clustered according to color. When seen from the distance, the groups of equines seemed like multi-colored clouds. Clearly, Xuanzong was happy with Wang's ability to create a grand spectacle that would enhance the emperor's prestige. Tang sources mainly dwell on the contributions of Confucian ritualists to planning the Feng and Shan ceremonies, but evidently "patrimonial specialists," like the Koguryan, Wang Maozhong, and other unknown logistical experts played key roles as well (ZZTJ 201:6345–7, 212:6766–8; Wechsler 1985, 186).<sup>11</sup>

Royal progressions in Eurasia often involved hunts (Allsen 2006, 186–93; Michael G. Chang 2007, 38–40, 84–6). The journey to Mount Tai in 725 was no exception. Besides being a sport, it was a ritualized martial activity dating back to antiquity in China and other parts of Eurasia (Allsen 2006, 160–85; Lewis 1990, 21–2). Since members of the Tang imperial lineage enjoyed chasing prey on horseback, it is not surprising that an "Imperial Hunt" rite was included in the Tang's *Kaiyuan ritual code* (TKYL 85:7b–8b). Literati Confucians continually discouraged hunting because of the danger and connection to military affairs (Wechsler 1980, 13–5). Later in history during the Qing Dynasty, it was expunged from the Confucian ritual code and reclassified as an Inner Asian rite (Rawski 1998, 20–1; Waley-Cohen 2006, 83). Despite the objections of literati, Tang emperors enjoyed hunting. Sometimes this pastime was mixed with diplomacy, as in 631 when Taizong hosted a grand hunt for the "chiefs of the barbarians" (ZZTJ 193:6086). Xuanzong did the same on the journey to Mount Tai in 725. The emperor ordered the "barbarian chiefs" to be issued bows and arrows and given the honor of accompanying him in his bodyguard. At one point, a rabbit ran in front of the mounted emperor, who killed it with one arrow. The leader of the Türk delegation was so enamored with the occasion that he quickly dismounted his horse, grabbed the dead hare and held it aloft while dancing and unctuously praising the emperor's martial prowess. The emperor, who was pleased with the obsequious display, decided to allow other

Türks to enter the honor guard and to gallop and shoot. One of the emperor's court diarists, who would have been a literati Confucian traveling at his side, strongly remonstrated that the emperor was placing himself in danger by allowing armed "barbarians" into his presence. Xuanzong then decided on a compromise and ordered that the foreign envoys should set out before him each day, thereby removing the threat to his safety (JTS 194a:5176; XTS 215b:6054). Xuanzong was curbing his impulse to use the imperial tour to bolster his personal charisma as a martial ruler.

The Feng and Shan progression provided numerous opportunities to reinforce the emperor's patrimonial role as provider of sustenance to his clients. For example, four days after Gaozong had performed the rite, he held an audience for civil and military officials on a specially built altar, which immediately was followed by a day-long banquet. Officials of the third rank and higher sat on the altar with the emperor, while others sat surrounding the platform with positions determined by rank. There was a great deal of drinking and music, and many officials approached Gaozong to offer personal congratulations (Wechsler 1985, 188).

The Feng and Shan rites of Gaozong and Xuanzong were special ceremonies that affirmed their pretensions to universal rule, but also humanized the emperors. Broad arrays of domestic and foreign elites were invited to witness perhaps the ultimate public display of Tang simultaneous kingship. The purpose was to dazzle all in attendance with the sacred power and patrimonial generosity of the emperor. It would have been possible for Confucian officials to view Gaozong or Xuanzong as benevolent August Emperors who were especially blessed by Heaven. Turk-Mongols could see the rulers as Heavenly Qaghans endowed with martial bravado and patrimonial magnanimity. The Feng and Shan rites had many of the same elements of travel and feasting as Taizong's *quriltai*-like ceremonies, where he was proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan. All three emperors used these large-scale gatherings to enhance their sacral and personal charisma with grand displays of simultaneous kingship.

### C. Eurasian Diplomatic Rituals

Tang emperors successfully played the role of simultaneous kings in part because the Confucian "Guest Rites" incorporated diplomatic norms that were common throughout medieval Eurasia. Exchanges of gifts and diplomatic letters were normal aspects of interstate relations. For example, in 568, half a century prior to the founding of the Tang Dynasty, the Türk ruler, Ishtemi Qaghan, sent an embassy of Sogdians and Türks to the Byzantine emperor Justin to discuss an alliance against Sasanian Iran. The Byzantine historian, Menander, noted that during their audience with Justin, Ishtemi's envoys "did everything according to the law of friendship," including handing over gifts of valuable raw silk and a diplomatic letter "written in Scythian" that was read by an interpreter. When the Türk embassy was ready to return home,



Justin dispatched his general Zemarchus to travel with them in order to continue negotiations with Ishtemi. Upon his arrival, Zemarchus presented gifts to Ishtemi, “as was the custom.” Later, when part of Zemarchus’s retinue departed, Ishtemi gave them gifts in return (Blockley 1985, 115, 119, 121). Even though the two powers lacked previous contacts, their meetings went smoothly in part because they shared some ideas about diplomatic protocol, particularly gift and correspondence exchanges, which also were customary elements of Byzantine-Sasanian diplomatic relations (Blockley 1985, 16; Cameron 1987, 120; Canepa 2009, 135–8, 154–66; Wiesehöfer 2007).

The experiences of the oasis kingdom of Gaochang (Turfan) reemphasize the ubiquity of Eurasian gift and correspondence exchanges. Prior to the Tang conquest in 640, Gaochang was engaging in diplomatic relations with the Western Türk Khanate, Tiele tribal union, and the Sui and Tang dynasties. The king of Gaochang, Qu Boya (r. 602–620), was a “primary vassal” of the Tiele, to whom he sent tax tribute, but also annually dispatched envoys to the Sui court to proffer gifts of local products (BS 97:3216; SS 83:1848). This kind of arrangement continued under the succeeding king, Qu Wentai (r. 620–640), who sent emissaries to submit “tribute” to the Tang court in 624 and twice in 629. On one mission Wentai’s ambassador “proffered” a robe of black fox fur, and in return Taizong “bestowed” a gold flower adorned with jewels for Wentai’s wife (JTS 198:5294; XTS 221a:6221; CFYG 970:5a–6b; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 103; Zhang and Rong 1998, 17–8). As depicted out of context in the Chinese sources, records of these exchanges of a vassal’s “tribute” and an emperor’s “bestowals” are meant to glorify the diplomatic centrality and preeminence of the Sui and Tang dynasties.

In actuality, Wentai was fully engaged in Eurasian diplomacy, a perspective that comes across clearly in the biography of the Buddhist pilgrim, Xuanzang. While playing his role as a Tang outer client, Wentai simultaneously was communicating with less powerful rulers and offering fealty to his primary master, the Western Türk qaghan, Ton Yabghu (Tong *yehu*, r. ca. 618–30). When Xuanzang departed Gaochang in 629, Wentai dispatched a diplomatic mission to accompany him on his journey to Ton Yabghu’s camp at Sūyāb (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). Wentai lavishly rewarded Xuanzang and provided individual letters of introduction to the twenty-four rulers on Xuanzang’s route to India. Each document had a bolt of silk twill attached to serve as Wentai’s credentials. The letters demonstrate that he had wide-ranging diplomatic contacts with peer states at the same time that he was engaged in relations with the great powers. Wentai’s letter to the qaghan was suffused with patrimonial language, “The Master of Law [Xuanzang] is the younger brother of your slave [Wentai]. He desires to seek the Law in the Brahmin Country. I beseech the Qaghan to care for the Master just as you care for your slave” (DCES 1:21; Beal [1911] 1974, 30–1). Wentai described himself as Ton Yabghu’s slave (i.e., client) and his relationship with Xuanzang in terms of fictive brotherly kinship. On that basis, Wentai requested favorable treatment for the monk from his patron, the



qaghan. Wentai also sent two cartloads of tribute to the Western Türk qaghan consisting of five hundred bolts of silk and fruit delicacies. Gaochang's exotic tribute to the Tang was purely symbolic, but the cartload of silk sent to the qaghan served as both a token of subordination and a tax payment. However, in both cases Gaochang used similar diplomatic protocol to relate to the great powers. Gift and correspondence exchanges clearly indicated the superordinate and subordinate parties in a hierarchical relationship.

Another common aspect of contemporary diplomacy was the creation of splendidly decorated courts. The Byzantines and Sasanians, like the Tang, favored monumental architecture (Canepa 2009, 133–4, 140; Wiesehöfer 2007, 75). As pastoral nomads, Turko-Mongol rulers often relied on mobile forms of visual pageantry such as beautifully decorated tents and lavish thrones. For example, Ishtemi held audiences for the Byzantine ambassador Zemarchus in three different locations. The first was in a tent where Ishtemi was seated on a golden throne with two wheels that allowed it to be drawn by a horse. The interior of the tent was decorated with silk hangings. On the next day they met in a yurt with silk hangings, statues, “golden urns, water-sprinklers and . . . golden pitchers,” where Ishtemi sat on a pure gold divan. On the third day they met in what may have been a permanent dwelling with “gilded wooden pillars and a couch of beaten gold which was supported by golden peacocks” (Blockley 1985, 119–21, n. 132). Half a century later, when Xuanzang met Ton Yabghu, the audience was held in a “large tent” decorated with gold ornaments that “blind the eye with their glitter” (DCES 2:27–8; Beal [1911] 1974, 42). The Turko-Mongol taste for gold and silver wares with elaborate decorations is well-documented (Jisl 1997, 36–8). The glittering adornment of Ton Yabghu's tent probably explains why the Türk and Uighur qaghans were said to live in the “gold tent” (XTS 217b:6149; ZZTJ 202:6403, 246:7947; Minorsky 1948, 279, 283, 295). The Uighur gold tent held one hundred people, but larger ones could create even grander displays. In 607, when Sui Yangdi took an imperial inspection tour to the northern Ordos region, the emperor wanted to “show off” to Qimin Qaghan and three thousand five hundred Turkic chieftains, so he had a tent erected said to hold either one or several thousand people. Yangdi hosted a feast and acrobatic show for the chiefs inside, and later bestowed the tent on Qimin, which would have allowed the latter to impress his followers (ZZTJ 180:5632; SS 84:1875; BS 99:3298; Xiong 2006, 39–41). The custom of holding court in a large, elaborately decorated tent appears to be rather ancient in Inner Asia. Alexander the Great adopted the practice after his conquests of Iran and Bactria around 328 BCE.<sup>12</sup> By medieval times, Tibetan monarchs also used large gold tents (Beckwith 2009, 148, n. 29). The Tang erected five types of tents, providing shelter at various stages of outdoor rituals, but not as a regular place to hold court.<sup>13</sup>

A significant development in Turko-Mongol political display was the Uighur “purpose driven” construction of Ordu Baliq (Khar Balgas), a capital city, which “expressed power differentials through elaborate and costly constructions” (p. 49, Map 1.4; Rogers

et al. 2005, 801). This represented the culmination of at least two centuries of Türk and Uighur interaction with the settled peoples of North China and West Asia, especially Sogdia. Previously, Turkic qaghans are known to have set up courts periodically at preexisting cities, such as Sūyāb and Qaghan Stupa City (Beshbaliq, chapter 2, map 2.1) (Chavannes [1900] 1969, 175; Forte 1994; Shimazaki 1974). The Sui built the cities in Inner Mongolia for their Türk client, Qimin Qaghan (Pan 1997, 105–7; Skaff 2004, 122–3). Bilgä Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire dreamed of building cities, but his sage advisor Tonyuquq dissuaded him by arguing that establishing fixed abodes would render them more vulnerable to Tang conquest (JTS 194a:5174; ZZTJ 211:6720–2). The Uighur may have felt more confident about building Ordu Baliq as a site of political administration and display because the Tang was constrained in foreign policy after the An Lushan rebellion. The Muslim traveler, Tamīm ibn Baḥr, described Ordu Baliq as a walled city with twelve huge iron gates and a large citadel that was topped by the Uighur qaghan's large gold tent (Minorsky 1948, 283). Archaeological excavations reveal that Ordu Baliq was the largest premodern urban center in Mongolia with an area of twenty-five square kilometers surrounded by a rectilinear exterior defensive wall. The rammed earth construction was a Chinese building technique.<sup>14</sup> The city interior included a residential area, public buildings, a citadel with elite residences, and large open spaces, presumably for tents. Even though the city was economically viable because of irrigated agriculture in the surrounding countryside and a community of resident merchants and artisans, the mainly political purpose of the capital was demonstrated by its abandonment after the fall of the Uighur Empire (Rogers et al. 2005, 803, 812–4).

The Uighur may have attempted to impress viewers with a display of monumental architecture, but the seemingly anachronistic gold tent on top of the citadel appears to have been most significant to steppe nomads. Tamīm ibn Baḥr was able to see it from afar, symbolically elevating the Uighur qaghan above his subjects (Minorsky 1948, 295). When a ninth-century Kirghiz qaghan went to war to throw off the Uighur monarch's suzerainty, he vowed, "Your time has run out! I will capture your gold tent. To the front of your tent, I will gallop on my horse and plant my standard" (XTS 217b:6149; ZZTJ 246:7947; Drompp 2005b, 36–7). To the Kirghiz, the gold tent was emblematic of Turko-Mongol power. Capturing the visually splendid tent, not the city, was the focus of their ambitions. Thus, we can conclude that among contemporary pastoral nomadic peoples, lavishly decorated tents and textiles had higher symbolic value than monumental architecture.

Status ranking of courtiers and diplomats is another aspect of court ritual that was common among Turko-Mongol peoples and throughout Eurasia. When Xuanzang visited Ton Yabghu Qaghan, status and sumptuary rules were evident. At their initial encounter Ton Yabghu was departing for a hunt. He was at the center of his retinue, dressed in a green silk caftan. His hair was unbound and a three-meter-long silken cord was tied around his head and hung down his back. Surrounding him

were over two hundred *tarqans*, his highest officials, dressed in polychrome silk caftans and wearing their hair in braids. Large numbers of troops accompanied them, clothed in garments of fine fur and spun animal hair. Evidently, the differences in hairstyle, clothing material, and color were indicators of status rank. Three days later, an audience was held in a large tent for Xuanzang and ambassadors from the Tang Dynasty and Gaochang Kingdom. The *tarqans*, clad in their polychrome silk clothing, sat in two rows on long carpets. Behind them stood an honor guard. Spatial arrangements were determined by rank, and the total effect was to focus attention on the ruler. The guests also appear to have been ranked. Xuanzang's biographer, perhaps with a bias toward promoting Buddhist spiritual authority, says that the qaghan treated the monk deferentially. Ton Yabghu allegedly came more than thirty steps outside the tent to greet and pay obeisance to Xuanzang. Back inside the tent, the ambassador from the Tang Empire entered. He was followed by the envoy from the relatively small city-state of Gaochang. After both emissaries presented diplomatic letters and gifts, the qaghan ordered them to be seated. Xuanzang, as someone who probably had been educated to believe that pastoral nomads were uncouth barbarians, expressed surprise at the arrangements. "Even though he ruled over felt tents, [his court] had a noble beauty" (DCES 2:28; Beal [1911] 1974, 42–3). Xuanzang probably was astonished in part because the methods used to display status ranking and glorify the ruler were familiar to him, such as color and type of clothing, and spatial arrangements of spectators. Symbolic displays of power relations also were common elements of Byzantine and Sasanian diplomatic rituals (Cameron 1987, 112–20; Canepa 2009, 133, 139; Wiesehöfer 2007). Among the Türks, the most noticeable differences in comparison to contemporary Sui-Tang guest rituals were the smaller scale of the court and greater accessibility of the ruler.

Paying obeisance to the monarch was another shared aspect of Confucian and Turko-Mongol court rituals. Similar practices existed as far west as the Sasanian and Byzantine empires.<sup>15</sup> Typically, among the Turkic peoples this required kneeling on one knee or more formally on both. The most respectful form involved kneeling and grasping the feet of the king (ZZTJ 220:7034; Esin 1970, 82–3). Turkic and Confucian obeisance roughly paralleled one another. Kneeling before more powerful figures was a common ritual gesture in both cultures, while the most reverent forms, Turkic grasping of feet and Chinese kowtow with head touching the ground, were analogous. The gestures were mutually recognized. In an incident occurring after recovery of Chang'an from rebel forces in 757, the Tang heir apparent, Li Shu, the future Daizong, was desperate to prevent the Uighur from looting the capital as they had been promised in payment for assistance in battle. Li Shu kowtowed to his blood brother, Yabghu, the Uighur heir apparent and commander of the forces, and pleaded to delay plunder until Luoyang also was retaken. Yabghu agreed to the proposal, and returned the gesture of respect by dismounting from his horse, kneeling in front of Li Shu, and grasping his feet (ZZTJ 220:7035). Obviously, both parties understood

the nonverbal expressions of obeisance that they had paid each other. So did others who were observing the two leaders, including the people of Chang'an, who felt gratitude toward Li Shu for compromising his dignity in order to save the city.

An anecdote from 758 demonstrates the seriousness with which Tang and Turkic elites took ritual protocols. On this occasion, the Tang still needed military assistance from the Uighur in order to preserve their dynasty. To cement the alliance, the emperor Suzong had agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Gele Qaghan. The gravity of the occasion moved Suzong to take another unusual measure in dispatching a high-ranking noble, his cousin Li Yu, to serve as ambassador to escort the princess to the Uighur camp. When Li Yu's party arrived at the Uighur court, the arrangements were formal and dignified. Gele, wearing a yellow ochre robe, the color reserved for Tang emperors, and "barbarian" hat, sat on a divan inside a tent, apparently facing his court through an opening in the front. Li Yu stood outside along with his retinue and numerous Uighur honor guards. During the audience Gele attempted to assert ritual dominance over Li Yu and indirectly the Tang. His yellow ochre robe, asserting equality with Tang emperors, must have galled Li Yu. The qaghan politely goaded him even further by asking why a member of the Tang entourage, a eunuch of lowly "slave status," was standing in front of him, Li Yu, a man of noble birth. Hearing this, the frightened eunuch realized that he had made an embarrassing gaffe and moved back to his proper place. Next, Gele stated that the "Monarchs, nobles, and officials of the two countries observe ritual protocol (*li*)," and asked Li Yu why he did not pay obeisance to the qaghan. Li Yu avoided a direct reply, but instead tried to gain the high ground ritually. He stated that the qaghan was being shown great favor through a marriage to the "true daughter" of the Son of Heaven of the Tang House. Furthermore, Li Yu reminded Gele that he was not following etiquette by remaining seated to receive a letter of investiture from his father-in-law. Thereupon, the qaghan stood up (JTS 195:5200-1; XTS 217a:6116; Mackerras 1973, 64-5). Li Yu was able to negotiate a symbolic victory in ritual protocol because Gele sought the prestige of the diplomatic marriage, and the Tang was in a less vulnerable military position than when Li Shu had kowtowed to Yabghu in the previous year.

This anecdote is preserved in the sources because the historians wished to demonstrate how a Tang noble was able to ritually subordinate a presumptuous barbarian. The implied message is that despite Tang military weakness, the dynasty remained culturally dominant. It was a common literati Confucian stereotype that ritual protocol was an ethnic marker that distinguished Han from barbarian (ZS 50:909; BS 99:3287; Abramson 2003, 128-37; 2008, 89-95). However, if we look at the anecdote from the Uighur perspective, Gele believed that proper court etiquette was an indicator of social status, not ethnicity. Uighur and Tang monarchs, who had the power to create an island of hierarchical ritual order in the midst of the chaos of ordinary existence, symbolically distinguished themselves from the hoi polloi. Literati Confucians were mistaken to believe that their standards of court etiquette were unique.

Rivalries in diplomatic protocol sometimes could escalate into physical violence. In another incident after the An Lushan rebellion, the Tang heir apparent, Li Kuo, who later would reign as Dezong, visited the Uighur camp in 762 to coordinate strategy, but acted with “haughty disregard for ritual protocol.” His behavior angered Böğü Qaghan, who was the blood brother of Li Kuo’s father, Daizong (Li Shu). In retaliation, Böğü demanded that Li Kuo perform a ceremonial dance of a nephew to his uncle. When one of Li Kuo’s aides said that it was not appropriate for the Tang heir apparent to dance in front of a Uighur qaghan, Böğü became furious and ordered four Tang officials to be beaten, causing two to die. Li Kuo was spared physical violence because of his youth and status, but the incident humiliated him (JTS 195:5203; XTS 217a:6118; Mackerras 1973, 72–5). This case is reminiscent of the Tang treatment of the Umayyad Caliphate ambassador who refused to kowtow to the emperor. In both instances, envoys who purposely did not pay proper respect to the ruler were treated severely. Li Kuo’s behavior also signaled the growing influence of literati Confucians in Tang foreign affairs, displaying an ideological inflexibility lacking in the first half of the dynasty.

Hospitality was another patrimonial aspect that was incorporated into Turko-Mongol and Eurasian ritual treatment of envoys and sometimes became the source of contention. The care and supervision of diplomats began on their journey to a capital. For example, Sasanian ambassadors traveling in Byzantium received an escort and lodging (Cameron 1987, 119; Canepa 2009, 131–2). During Tamim ibn Baḥr’s journey to Ordu Baliq, he was allowed to use the Uighur horse relay system, though he apparently had to carry his own provisions (Minorsky 1948, 283). Once an ambassador arrived at the camp of a Turkic qaghan, food and drink were provided. When the Byzantine ambassador, Zemarchus, visited the Türk ruler, Ishtemi Qaghan, around 570, he and his retinue were treated to feasting and drinking parties for the first two days. Six decades later, when Xuanzang visited the Western Türks, he was provided with lodging. After the pilgrim’s audience, a feast was provided that included alcoholic beverages and meat dishes. The qaghan solicitously attended to the dietary needs of the Buddhist monk by offering him grape juice and vegetarian fare. Musicians entertained the guests (DCES 2:28; Beal [1911] 1974, 42–3). Sasanian and Byzantine emperors also provided music and other forms of entertainment to ambassadors (Canepa 2009, 184). All rulers worked to create an image as a generous patrimonial host.

Seating arrangements were taken seriously in Eurasian diplomacy because of their connection to status ranking. As far west as Iran and Byzantium, banquets were expected to have seating placements determined by social rank (Brosius 2007, 41–5; Cameron 1987, 112–3; Canepa 2009, 182). This also was the case in Eastern Eurasia. For example, in 730 Xuanzong hosted a banquet for the Türgish ambassador while a Türk envoy also was at the capital. The two ambassadors argued over the most distinguished seat. The Türk envoy said, “The Türgish have a small country, and originally were the vassals of the Türks. It is not appropriate for them to occupy

the place of honor.” The Türgish emissary replied, “Today’s banquet is being held in my honor. It is not proper for me to occupy an inferior position.” At that point in time, the two khanates were relatively equal in power and the Tang was not interested in opening hostilities with either one. Tang officials decided on a compromise corresponding to their actual power relations by setting up separate east and west tents so each ambassador could occupy his own seat of distinction (JTS 194b:5191–2; XTS 215b:6067; CFYG 975:9b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 50). Even at domestic feasts, Tang officials were known to have argued with each other over their places at tables (Benn 2002, 134). Depending on circumstances, lower than expected seating rank could be considered an insult to personal pride, the honor of a country, or both.

Deviations from customary protocols or diplomatic immunity for ambassadors signaled the start of hostilities. Verbal and nonverbal signals could presage warfare. When the Türk qaghan, Ishtemi, hosted a banquet for ambassadors from Byzantium and Sasanian Iran, he gave the Byzantines a more honorable divan to indicate his displeasure with the Sasanians. After Ishtemi began to verbally threaten the Sasanians, the Iranian envoy, apparently infuriated at the slights in protocol, “abandoned the custom of silence that prevailed among them at their feasts” and argued with Ishtemi (Blockley 1985, 121, 123). More drastically, when the Avar qaghan, Baian, decided to go to war in 568, he imprisoned Byzantine envoys “in contravention of the universally recognized rights of ambassadors” (Blockley 1985, 133).

## II. Investiture as Symbolic Subordination

Investiture rituals and symbols were another ubiquitous aspect of Eurasian diplomatic relations. When sovereigns installed outer clients with official or feudal titles, the ceremony was accompanied by the bestowal of regalia that served as visible signs of subordination. Most types of paraphernalia, such as robes, belts, and battle flags, were universally recognized in Eurasia. To politically sophisticated viewers, variations in the designs and colors of each would identify the political affiliation and status of the wearer or possessor (Ebrey 1999a; McCormick 1989, 163). Investiture insignia were the forerunners of modern political emblems like national flags. However, medieval regalia were not dispersed among the general populace like modern national symbols because the items represented a personal bond between the ruler and client. As Stewart Gordon has noted, Eurasian investiture was “highly personalized” and the items ideally were granted from “the hand of the leader.” The type and design of the accouterments signaled the client’s political affiliation and rank, and distinguished him from the masses. The power of this form of nonverbal communication should not be underestimated. Even in late twentieth-century Afghanistan, the wearer of an elaborately decorated cloak of a powerful tribe could expect to be treated deferentially (Gordon 2001, 1–5).



### A. Male (and Sometimes Female) Dress in Eurasia

Since clothing, and especially belts and riding coats, played such an important role in medieval Eurasian investiture, understanding of styles is needed. The riding coat was a heavy or lightweight garment in various lengths, secured with a leather belt, and typically worn over an inner shirt, pants, and boots. The outfit originally developed to facilitate horseback transportation, so coats normally had slits on the sides to allow a rider to straddle a mount. Three main types of riding coats were common in medieval Eurasia: the tunic, which lacked an opening in front, and was slipped over the head; the coat, which resembled a modern overcoat and buttoned in the front; and the caftan, which had one front panel that folded over the other one to seal on the side (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2004). Leather belts, fastened with a metal buckle and tailpiece, often were decorated with round or square plaques made from gold, silver, jewels, bronze, iron or bone, stitched or riveted to the outer face of the strap. Each plaque normally had a hole in the center that allowed an item, such as a leather pouch or dagger, to be strung from it (Findley 2005, 46; Juliano and Lerner, eds. 2001b, 267; So and Bunker 1995, 77–81; Sun 1993, 53–7). A warrior's scabbard was attached to the left side of the belt and the quiver to the right, to allow either the saber or arrows to be drawn with the right hand (Chen 1997; Erdélyi et al. 2000, 99–100; Golden 2002, 149; Jisl 1997, 15–8). Turkic statues appear to depict the figure wearing mainly a tunic or coat, and sometimes a caftan sealing on the left, which prevented the right sleeve from catching while drawing a sword or arrow, or pulling a bow (Erdélyi et al. 2000, 65–6). The statue of the Turkic warrior in Figure 5.3 is depicted wearing a coat, boots, and belt with attached dagger and sword.<sup>16</sup>

The basic ensemble originated in the steppe and became the common form of male dress in Iran by at least 1000 BCE, but the material, style, and color varied from place to place and tribe to tribe. Some nomadic women also wore this outfit. In Iran monarchs adopted the riding coat-pants ensemble as ceremonial court dress during the Parthian Dynasty (250 BCE–224 CE) (Yarshater et al. 1985–1999, 733, 737, 752–60; Knauer 2004, 8–9). To the west in the Roman Empire, by the fourth century, writers were remarking on the “barbarized” military clothing that had replaced togas. Roman emperors also began to wear lavish silks and bestow ritual versions of these garments on soldiers and diplomatic envoys. Sumptuary regulations for clothing were developed to distinguish the status of wearers. Some contemporary observers interpreted these developments as a malevolent influence from Iran that would soften the Roman spirit (MacMullen 1964, 445–51). Boots were added to Sasanian court dress by the early seventh century and later the Byzantines adopted the fashion (Canepa 2009, 201–4). In sum, the jacket, pants, belt, and boots ensemble, which derived from the practical needs of horse riding, became a uniform element of Eurasian court style in the fourth through seventh centuries. The Tibetan envoys depicted in Figure 5.1 wear this garb.



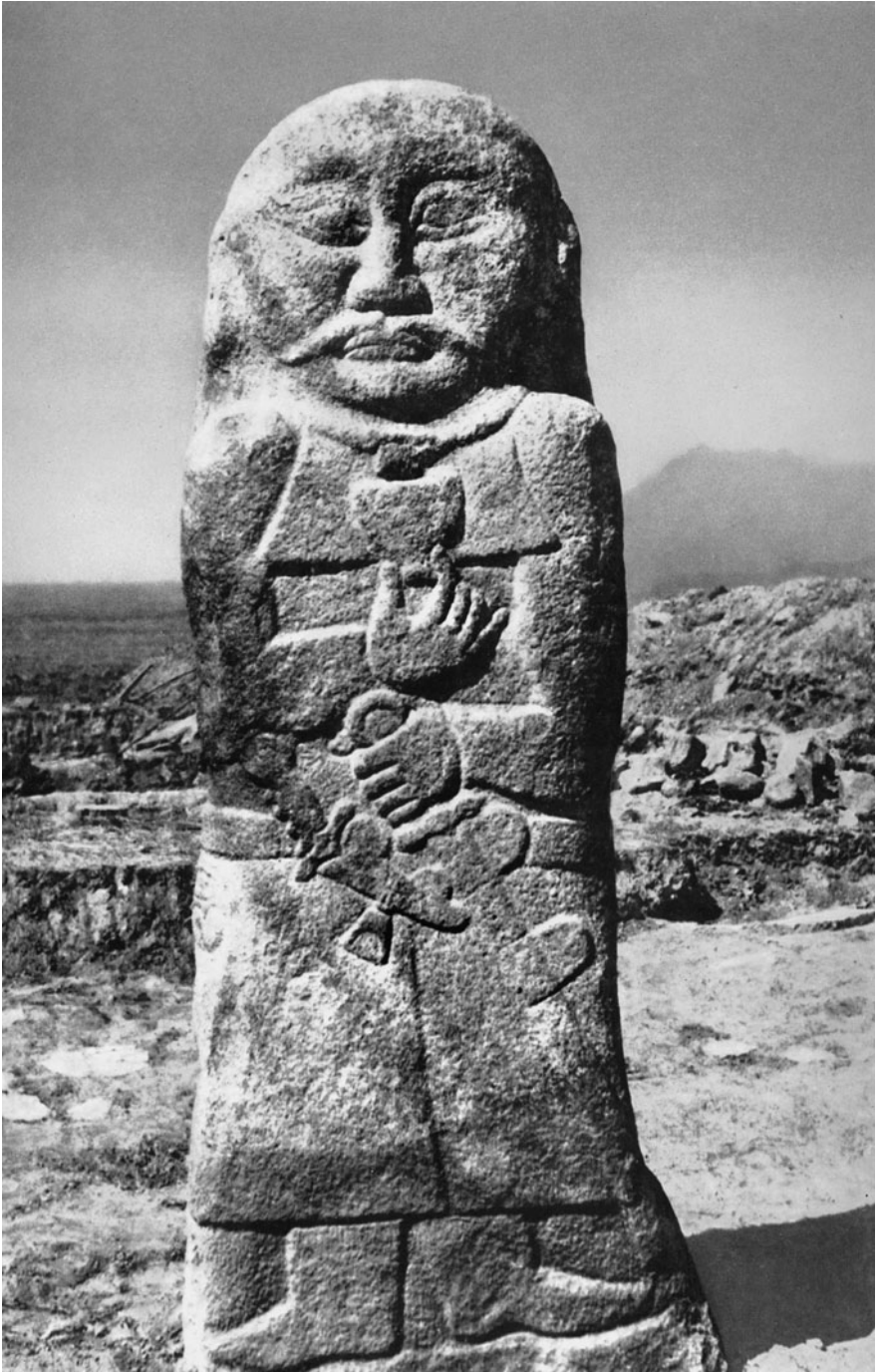


Figure 5.3. Western Turkic Statue, Xinjiang

In China, pants and caftans closed with cloth belts became the common military wear and the typical work clothes for men during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–256 BCE), probably accompanying the introduction of horseback riding from the steppe (Sheng 1995, 50–1; Zhou et al. 1988, 13, 28; Zhou et al. 1984, 11–33). During the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang, the outfit experienced increased popularity among all social strata in North China—a result of Sārbi influence and the prevalence of equestrian transportation—becoming the primary garb for everyday activities (Lingley 2010). Even some elite and plebeian women began to wear the so-called “barbarian clothing,” originally for horseback riding and later as fashionable attire (Zhou et al. 1988, 55, 93; Zhou et al. 1984, 78, 108–11, 132–3; Abramson 2003, 127–8). The most popular Tang riding coat style seems similar to the type visible in Parthian statues. It consisted of a tunic with a round collar that was girded with a belt (Zhang 1995, 33, 86–7; Wang 1990, 92–4, pls. 1, 3, 4). Another version resembled a long caftan with lapels that sealed with a belt (Zhang 1995, 104, 116–7). In both cases, slits on either side of the garment from the thigh to the ankles allowed for horseback riding. It was a practical outfit for farming, housework, horseback riding, hunting, and polo playing. Figure 5.4 depicts the Tang military officer, Qiu Xinggong, during battle in 621. He is wearing a typical outfit of caftan over armor, belt, trousers and boots. Suspended from his belt are a quiver in the foreground (his right) and saber with only the hilt visible in the background (his left), both properly accessible to his right hand (Zhou 2009, 211–28). His clothing and equipment are strikingly similar to the Turkic warrior depicted in Figure 5.3.

For several reasons, luxurious versions of belts and riding coats had become typical investiture regalia by medieval times in parts of Eurasia where horseback riding was common (Stewart Gordon 2001; Canepa 2009, 190–205; La Vaissière 2007, 70, 76). First, when a patrimonial ruler outfitted his clients, he played the role of the patriarch symbolically providing the necessities of life, which included clothing. Second, as the two most visible garments of the standard male attire, the riding coat and belt were best positioned to project messages about the political affiliation of the wearer. Third, in some cultures, clothing investiture also had a sacred dimension. For example, among Turko-Mongol peoples putting on a hat or belt in the presence of a god or ruler was an indication of subordination (Allsen 1997, 49; Roux 1975, 50–1). Nonetheless, it is necessary to keep in mind that other items accompanied investiture. The Byzantines, for example, also sent clients letters of investiture and seals of office (McCormick 1989, 162–3).

## B. Turko-Mongol Investiture

Before describing Turkic belt and caftan investiture, it is necessary to mention two other symbols of political affiliation and subordination, the battle flag and arrow credentials. The Türk combat standard was trimmed with feathers and displayed a



Figure 5.4. Stone Relief of Qiu Xinggong with Tang Taizong's Charger

gold wolf head, emblematic of the legendary ancestry of the royal lineage (ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; SS 84:1864; TD 197:5404; Chen 1997, 44–5). The association of this flag with investiture is clear from the cases of the borderland warlords, Liu Wuzhou and Liang Shidu, who received wolf-head flags when they were invested as subordinate Türk qaghans (JTS 55:2252–3, 56:2280; XTS 86:3711–2, 87:3730; ZZTJ 183:5724). The standards, symbolizing the expectation that clients would render military service to their master, apparently had high prestige value in Turkic society. Several funerary epitaphs of Turkic elites in South Siberia boast that the deceased was the possessor of the “combat banner” (Vasilyev 1991, 121–5). The Türks also issued credentials in the form of arrows with gold heads, which were used to verify the identity of the sender of correspondence or tax tallies (ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; TD 197:5403). The importance of the arrows is demonstrated by an incident in 679. The Tang general, Pei Xingjian, captured the Western Türk qaghan and then successfully used his credential arrows to lure and apprehend all of the chiefs of subordinate tribes (Skaff 2009b, 186, n. 57).<sup>17</sup> A Turkic chief's arrow credentials and battle standard served the purposes of identifying him as the qaghan's political and military client and bolstering his prestige.

Turkic rulers took caftan investiture and color-coding of garments seriously. As mentioned above, a Western Türk qaghan wore green in 629 and a Uighur qaghan wore yellow ochre in 758. The latter usurped the color reserved for Tang emperors. As mentioned previously, polychrome silk caftans were reserved for the highest officials of the Western Türks.<sup>18</sup> In 697, Qapaghan Qaghan bestowed crimson robes on Khitan diplomatic envoys (ZZTJ 206:6521). In the following year during an invasion of northeastern China, Qapaghan attempted to invest local officials with robes of crimson or purple, which were Tang colors. His choice of shades may reflect an ideological challenge to Empress Wu's Zhou Dynasty because Qapaghan claimed his army sought to restore the Tang (JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6530–1). The exact color schemes of these Turkic courts are unknown, but some choices seem to express political rivalry.

Belts seem to have been more important than caftans as Turko-Mongol investiture regalia, serving as a more literal symbol of bondage. Among the Türks, the type of metal and number of plaques indicated rank. Turkic epitaphs from Southern Siberia indicate that gold belts had approximately the same high prestige value as battle standards, and often the same person possessed both. One warrior received gold plaques from a qaghan because of his valor. Another boasted of possessing a belt with forty-two gold plaques (Jisl 1997 16–7; Vasilyev 1991, 121–4). Evidence that Turkic qaghans were expected to personally bestow caftans and belts derives from a lurid anecdote related to Qapaghan Qaghan's invasion of Hebei during the reign of Empress Wu. After capturing a local prefect and his wife the qaghan made an impromptu attempt to invest the husband with a “gold lion belt” and purple robe, the former apparently of Turko-Mongol origin and the latter the appropriate color for a Tang prefect. Qapaghan is depicted melodramatically holding aloft the belt and caftan and threatening, “Surrender and become [my] official, resist and die!” Supposedly, the wife burst out “On this very day, we will recompense the benevolence of the state [with our lives]!” The Türks then killed both (JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6534). Without a hint of irony, the literati Confucian writers preserved the anecdote to stereotype Qapaghan as a presumptuous barbarian who believed that he could win the allegiance of one of Empress Wu's officials. Even though the Confucian historians went so far as to overlook the gender of the female monarch—who was another frequent target of their displeasure—in order to depict the qaghan as irredeemably alien, the anecdote reveals a shared assumption that robe and belt bestowal established the authority of a ruler over subordinates.

Turko-Mongols obviously took investiture seriously, but the details of the ceremony are scarce. Probably the best contemporary description of a Turkic investiture ritual comes from an event in the summer of 607 involving Qimin Qaghan of the Türks, who confirmed his loyalty to Sui Yangdi a few years after the latter had succeeded his father. As described above, Yangdi traveled north on an imperial inspection tour to the borderland town of Yulin inside the great bend of the Yellow River,



where he feasted Qimin Qaghan and his followers in a gigantic tent. Thereafter Yangdi and his party traveled to the outskirts of Yulin, where he had a temporary city constructed. It was three thousand meters in circumference, surrounded by a decorative fence made from beautifully painted cloth strung between posts, which allegedly awed the Türks. Within the textile palisade Yangdi held an audience for Qimin in a tent. During the ceremony Qimin offered a toast to the long life of the emperor, knelt and then prostrated. Outside of the tent, the Türk nobles were standing with their heads bowed, upper torsos bared, and chests slashed to ritualistically proffer obeisance and a blood oath. Yangdi supposedly was greatly pleased by the display of subservience. At the end of the ceremony Yangdi bestowed gifts on Qimin, his wife, and the three thousand five hundred chiefs in attendance (ZZTJ 180:5633–4; SS 84:1875; CFYG 974:8b).

In offering the toast, Qimin may have been enacting the role of “companion of the cup” who with the “companion of the quiver” shared the highest rank at Turkic courts (Esin 1970, 87). To Türks in attendance, Qimin’s wielding of the cup effectively claimed the second most powerful position in the Sui Empire. The ritual as a whole is similar to the Mongol ceremony in which Ögödei Khan was proclaimed the successor to Genghis Khan in 1228. All in attendance “in accordance with their ancient custom removed their hats and slung their belts across their backs,” while a nephew stood near Ögödei holding a cup. Then everybody knelt three times while saying “May the kingdom prosper by his being Khan!” Later, the new khan presented gifts to his followers “each in accordance with his pretensions [i.e., status]” (Spuler [1972] 1996, 50–1). Comparing Mongol and Türk ceremonies, three elements—a cupbearer, obeisance, and gift bestowal—are practically identical. The partial removal of the clothing in the earlier ritual and doffing of hats and belts in the later one had similar symbolic effects. When the garments were replaced at the end of both ceremonies, participants would have been symbolically bound to a new master. The slashing of skin in the Türk ritual was a unique aspect that recalls a blood oath. At the end of both ceremonies Yangdi and Ögödei had become the leaders of Turko-Mongol peoples. The ceremonies actually represented combined accession and investiture rituals in which the roles of masters and clients were made manifest.

Yangdi and Qimin’s public performance before assembled Türks and Sui officials is a good example of the ambiguous and multivalent quality of rituals in general and Eurasian investiture in particular. Yangdi chose to depict the event conventionally in a poem, alluding to Han Dynasty-Xiongnu relations, as the dominance of a Son of Heaven over northern barbarians (SS 84:1875; Xiong 2006, 212). The literati Confucian historians preserved the detailed description of the ceremony only because they considered its barbarity to be evidence that Yangdi was a stereotypically bad last emperor of a dynasty. Although the literati authors may have found the spectacle to be repulsive, the inescapable conclusion is that three years after the death of his father, Yangdi had held a *quriltai* that concluded with a Turko-Mongol ceremony

to cement his succession to rule over Qimin's Inner Mongolian Türks. Despite Yang-di's poem professing stereotypical dominance over foreigners, he had accommodated Türk norms. The ceremony contained sufficient ambiguity to allow those in attendance to interpret the affair according to their presuppositions.

### C. Sui-Tang Investiture of Outer Clients

Sui-Tang investiture normally took place in the context of Confucian "Guest Rites," which, as noted above, incorporated many patrimonial elements. During these ceremonies, most investiture symbols were granted somewhat ambiguously in the context of gift exchanges. Some of the bestowed regalia were culturally specific to the Chinese tradition. Other objects were common to Turko-Mongol and other Eurasian investiture rituals, such as robes and belts. Depending on the backgrounds of spectators or participants, they might interpret the regalia as acceptance of bureaucratic positions, personal adherence to a patrimonial lord, straightforward gifts, or some combination of the three. Tang evidence of investiture practices is far more plentiful than Sui, but the few Sui examples hint that some Tang conventions derived from Sui precedents, which in turn had roots in earlier Eastern Eurasian history.

Sui-Tang investiture included paperwork to appoint outer clients. Whether or not foreign elites could read Chinese, a letter of investiture was issued and delivered. The Tang bureaucratic regulations for letters investing outer clients parallel the prescriptions used for Tang officials. The physical letter of conferment was supposed to correspond to the rank of the addressee with fine gradations indicated by the formality of language and quality of the paper, ink, and letter casing. The most general indicator of the status of the recipient was the type of document. An "investiture letter" (*ceshu*) was more prestigious, being reserved for the conferment of a title of nobility. The "edict letter" (*zhishu*) was issued to appoint high officials (TLD 9:7a–b; Kaneko 1988, 76; Rotours 1974, 174, n. 2, 3; Zhenping Wang 1994; Wang 2005, 144–57). As a client's relations with the Tang improved, promotions in rank could occur. For example in 718, the Türgish leader, Sulu, received an "edict letter" appointing him as Supernumerary General-in-Chief of the Left Forest of Plumes Army (official rank 3a), Great Military Commissioner of Jinfang Route Army, and the Duke of Xunguo (noble rank 1b). In the following year, he received the more prestigious "investiture letter" conferring the title of "Loyal and Obedient Qaghan" (JTS 194b:5191; XTS 215b:6067; CFYG 964:13b–14b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 35–7, 42). As mentioned previously, the use of paperwork to invest titles was a practice shared by the Byzantines and probably others.

Along with the letter of investiture, various paraphernalia were bestowed upon the outer client as visible symbols of subservience. Some of the items had origins in the Confucian-bureaucratic tradition, while others represented accommodation to

Turko-Mongol norms. When Ishbara Qaghan of the First Türk Empire became a Sui vassal in 685, Emperor Wendi bestowed drums and horns of the Sui army. Not long after, they launched two joint military campaigns against Ishbara's enemies (SS 84:1869; ZZTJ 176:5482–3; Pan 1997, 103–4). Under Taizong, steppe rulers who were invested as qaghans also received military drums and battle flags, symbolizing the expectation that the client would supply cavalry to Tang armies.<sup>19</sup> The battle standard, of course, had particular strong resonance among Turko-Mongol peoples as a symbol of delegated authority. Turko-Mongols also used drums and horns in battle (Chen 1997, 238). More practically, the sight of the flag and sound of the drums would have identified nomadic allies of the Tang during battle, and may have been used to direct troop movements (TD 149:3813; Graff 2002a, 193–4). After the reign of Taizong, only one additional instance of Tang battle standard investiture is known (CFYG 964:19b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 62).

The Sui and early Tang also bestowed clothing and other symbols of official service. At the same time that Sui Wendi sent drums and horns to Ishbara Qaghan, he bestowed caftans and carriages reserved for Sui officials (SS 84:1869; ZZTJ 176:5482–3; Pan 1997, 103–4). Sixty-two years later, when Taizong assembled Tiele chiefs to appoint them as Tang bridle officials, each received the identification credentials of Tang bureaucrats and officers, a fish-shaped iron tally with gilded lettering (XTS 217a:6112–3). Tang functionaries normally received cast bronze fish tallies at the time of appointment. Taizong's choice of iron rather than bronze for the tallies of the Tiele was highly significant because iron credentials with gold lettering were reserved exclusively for meritorious officials.<sup>20</sup> Taizong was sending a subtle but pointed message to literati Confucian officials or others who may have disapproved of the inclusion of Turko-Mongols in the Tang Empire: the emperor considered the Tiele to be among the most privileged of his imperial servants. Taizong gave even greater honors to "favored" Tiele leaders when he "personally bestowed" specially manufactured "treasure swords" and crimson and yellow polychrome silk robes with auspicious imagery (CFYG 974:12a; XTS 217a:6113). These particular types of swords and robes were not among the prescribed regalia for officials, but gave a clear signal to the Tiele leadership, who would have readily recognized robes bestowed from the hand of the emperor as symbols of political investiture. Treasure swords, which appear to have been prized in Inner Asia, were emblematic of the future role of the Tiele in Tang military campaigns against the Western Türks.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the fish tallies, and their manufacture from iron, would have been less important to the bridle chiefs than to regular Tang officers and bureaucrats who witnessed the occasion.

After Taizong's reign, conferrals of apparel and other assorted civil and military paraphernalia continued. According to Tang regulations, foreigners who came to the capital for investiture as bridle officials were to be bestowed with two formal ceremonial outfits, appropriate to their ranks, consisting of an elaborate cap and gown, and the *kuzhe* outfit consisting of a dress riding coat, girded with a leather



belt, over billowing pants. The former is the ancient court garb, somewhat analogous to the design of the vestments of Christian priests, and is not suited to horseback riding or other kinds of physical activity. The accompanying belts were made of fabric that was secured with a hook or knot, and did not play an important role in early Chinese investiture (So and Bunker 1995, 81–4; Zhou et al. 1984, 117–22; Zhou et al. 1988, 79–80).<sup>22</sup> The latter outfit, a formal version of the riding coat, belt, and pants ensemble common throughout Eurasia, was a ritual innovation of the period of Sārbi rule over North China (XTS 46:1196; Rotours 1974, 93, n. 2; Xiang 2001, 44–50; Zhou et al. 1988, 54–5, 61; Zhou et al. 1984, 77–8, 100–1). During the Tang, the *kuzhe* ceremonial riding suit, which included plush silk caftans and precious metal belts, was required for many state rituals, where it was worn in combination with leather boots, a Tang innovation (JTS 21:819; XTS 11:312; Zhou et al. 1988, 77; Zhou et al. 1984, 114). The Tang's adoption of dress boots occurred at approximately the same time as the Sasanians, as mentioned above, in the seventh century. Literati Confucians criticized the incorporation of formal riding garb into imperial ceremonies, but only began to have success in excluding the *kuzhe* from some state rituals after the An Lushan rebellion (JTS 149:4015; XTS 164:5035–6). In contrast, Turko-Mongols would have readily welcomed investiture in luxurious designs of familiar riding clothing, which would have served as recognizable status symbols on the steppe.

During Gaozong's reign, investiture goods continued to combine Tang official regalia with items adapted to Inner Asian tastes. For example, after the conquest of Koguryō in 668, a Tang representative bestowed caftans, belts, and gold buttons on local elites (XTS 110:4124). The latter appears to be a particular accommodation to Koguryan expectations because their kings wore leather belts covered with gold buttons (XTS 220:6186). In a different case, when Qibi Heli's son, Ming, inherited his famous father's titles and rulership of the Qibi bridle tribe in Hexi in 677, he received a polychrome silk robe and a "treasure belt" (XTS 110:4121). The colors and designs of the items presented to Qibi were non-standard, and probably represented accommodation to Inner Asian preferences. For example, the kings of the oasis state of Kucha, who like the rulers of Gaochang originally were vassals of the Western Türks, sat on a gold lion throne wearing polychrome silk caftans and treasure belts (JTS 198:5303; XTS 221b:6230).<sup>23</sup> As early as 174 BCE a polychrome silk robe was among the items that the Han emperor Wendi sent to the Xiongnu ruler (SJ 110:2897). Polychrome silk (*jin*), which occurred in various weaves and designs, may have been the most prized fabric in medieval Inner Asia based on numerous archaeological finds that were woven in West, Inner, and East Asia (Sheng 1998; Zhao 2004).

During Xuanzong's reign, which is better documented than earlier ones, the items bestowed on bridle officials appear to reflect de facto sumptuary standards somewhat different from the de jure regulations for regular Tang officials. Monarchs, such as the Khitan king in 720, received a sumptuous, non-standard polychrome

silk caftan, and a jade belt inlaid with gold and jewels of officials of the third rank and above (CFYG 974:20b). The lower tiers of the elite received robe colors and belt materials that drew from the standards of two adjacent Tang *de jure* official ranks. For example, a number of Turko-Mongols were appointed to positions as generals in the imperial guard corps (rank 3b) in 715. They received purple caftans appropriate for officials of the third rank, but gold belts of officials of the fourth rank (CFYG 974:16b).<sup>24</sup> This created a distinctive clothing protocol for bridle officials. Although their belt types put them at a disadvantage compared to regular officials of the same rank, the garments bestowed upon Turko-Mongol monarchs can be interpreted as a sign of favor. The visually stunning jade and gold belts (Watt and Harper, eds. 2004, 298) and caftans with lavish polychrome designs seem to have placed them above the highest ranking regular Tang officials, who were allotted the same jade and gold belts, but assigned the solid purple caftans of the second tier of tribal leadership. Xuanzong's choice of caftans and belts transmitted a subtle visual clue indicating that Turko-Mongol monarchs were his most valued officials.

Two other elements of bridle chief investiture, a fish pouch and the "seven accoutrements" of Tang military officers of fifth rank and higher, appeared in many of the above examples from Gaozong and Xuanzong's reigns. The fish pouch was an innovation of 651. Made of silver or gold, it was attached to the belt to hold the fish-shaped identification credentials (Rotours 1952, 132–4). The "seven accoutrements" were standard issue to high-ranking Tang military officers to symbolize their prestige and authority. Five of the seven are known to be typical equipment of Eurasian warriors: a sword, dagger, whetstone, and pouch containing a flint and steel striker. Two of the seven items have not been identified because, significantly, they appear to be transliterations of non-Chinese words (JTS 45:1953; XTS 24:529; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 36, n. 4). Aside from the fish pouch, all of these items would have been readily recognized in the Turko-Mongol world where warriors typically attached daggers, swords, and other equipment to their belts. The flint and steel in a pouch are seemingly insignificant objects that are worthy of notice. As symbols and practical instruments, they recognized the exclusive authority of Tang military officers to decide whether it was safe to start fires, which could be visible to the enemy. Flint and steel in silk and leather pouches have been discovered in the graves of Turkic chiefs (Erdélyi et al. 2000, 65, pl. 82; Jisl 1997, 17). A pouch most likely dangled on a pendant attached to a belt plaque. The "seven accoutrements" undoubtedly were of fine workmanship, lending prestige to the bearers. Even though the fish pouches were less familiar in the steppe world, their manufacture from precious metals would have made them valued items, and their piscine shape would have identified wearers as Tang clients.

Foreign envoys from all corners of Eurasia visiting the Tang court understood the political significance of accepting or refusing a robe, belt, or standard. For example, when Qapaghan Qaghan declared war on Empress Wu in 698, one of his five grievances was that the empress had confiscated the crimson and purple caftans that

he previously had bestowed upon her envoys (JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6530–1). At the heart of their dispute was a disagreement over which one was the preeminent ruler in Eastern Eurasia with the right to invest clients. Depending on the background of the envoy, the investiture paraphernalia probably had differing degrees of symbolic power. For example, when Xuanzong personally entertained a seasoned Tibetan ambassador at a banquet in the inner palace in late 730, the emperor bestowed a purple caftan, gold belt, and fish pouch. The ambassador accepted the former two, but politely rejected the latter by saying that he was not worthy of an object as precious as the fish pouch. He evidently recognized the fish tally, but not the caftan and belt, as a symbol of full-fledged incorporation into Tang officialdom (JTS 196a:5231; Beckwith 1987, 106; Richardson 1970). Experienced diplomats could read specific symbols, like the fish pouch, which unequivocally signaled the wearer was a Tang client.

## Conclusion : Eurasian Diplomacy in Perspective

The patrimonial aspects of diplomatic rituals were widely shared in medieval Eurasia. Prior to the rise of the Sui and Tang dynasties, while North China was still dominated by Sārbi rulers, the Türks shared common assumptions with the Byzantines and Iranians about hosting diplomatic visitors. Confucian guest rituals incorporated these customary Eurasian patrimonial elements, such as visual splendor, gift exchanges, feasts, and etiquette related to status ranking. Even the Confucian ideological emphasis on centrality was not unique (Canepa 2009, 101–2). These norms of foreign relations remained integral to diplomacy of the Mongol Empire half a millennium later (Broadbridge 2008, 16–26). Great powers used diplomatic ceremonies to highlight the preeminence of the ruler at the top of a hierarchical political structure. Within this ritual arena, monarchs reserved the exclusive authority to invest outer clients. Some of the investiture regalia, luxurious caftans and belts, were widely shared. The subjective effect of diplomatic ceremonies created a court that symbolically replicated an expansive realm with the sacred ruler superior to all other men in terms of status, power, and wealth.

Uniformity of rituals and symbols did not lead to homogeneity. Symbols could vary in their degrees of importance from culture to culture. Taking the physical setting of the ritual arena as an example, in the imperial Chinese tradition monumental architecture played a major role in creating displays of grandeur, while tents held a minor position. The relationship was reversed in Turko-Mongol societies, where gigantic and/or elaborately decorated tents were common, but large-scale architecture held a less important place. Rulers, like Sui-Tang monarchs, who had a wide variety of symbols available to impress guests, such as grand architecture and elaborate tents, were more likely to awe a variety of visitors with different tastes. Other symbols were distinctive, such as the Turkic arrow tipped with a gold head or Tang

fish pouch, and were meant to clarify boundaries between political allegiances. Despite these local variations, Eurasian diplomats visiting the other courts were unlikely ever to feel totally out of place. Uniformities formed a foundational semiotic code for diplomatic ceremonies, while particular choices in decorations, music, or symbols distinguished polities from each other, creating symbolic political boundaries. The nonverbal nature of most of these cues made them particularly suited to the multilingual arenas of diplomacy and empire building (Althoff 2004, 162).

Beneath the pomp of ceremony, *realpolitik* always was lurking. From the perspective of monarchs, court rituals served as competitive exhibitions of “soft power” or “hegemonic discourses” in which the presence of foreigners served dual purposes. One was to awe the visitors with the majesty of the ceremonies and imperial wealth and generosity. The other was to lend prestige to the sacred monarch as an individual who could attract peoples from afar to pay respect voluntarily. The ostensible elevation of the monarch often masked ambiguous multipolar diplomacy. A minor state like Gaochang had enough leeway to be a primary client of the Western Türks and secondary client of the Sui and Tang, and engage in contacts with a variety of other small states. Despite the formality of the ceremonies, diplomatic visits provided opportunities to manipulate the semiotic code of protocol to send messages ranging from subtle to blunt. Canepa (2009) also notes this phenomenon in Sasanian-Byzantine relations.

Tracing the origins of uniformities in medieval diplomatic customs is beyond the scope of this book but, analogous to the case of ideology of the previous chapter, it most likely was the product of military and diplomatic entanglements in Eurasia over the course of millennia. Status ranking at court is evident in Zhou China as early as the eighth century BCE and Achaemenid Persia in the sixth century BCE (Brosius 2007, 54–6; Wang 2005, 132). More westerly parts of Eurasia began to be influenced by these practices from the time of Alexander the Great’s conquests in West Asia by 330 BCE. Despite some resistance, many of these practices were incorporated into court rituals by the late Roman Empire (Canepa 2009, 122–53; Smith 2007; Spawforth 2007b; Wiesehöfer 2007). In the east, Japan’s diplomatic entanglements with the Sui, Tang, and Korean peninsula state of Silla encouraged seventh-century Japanese monarchs to glorify themselves with monumental palace architecture and a ranking system that included color-coded caps and robes (Piggott 1997, 82–91, 132–46). The spread of diplomatic norms was not unidirectional, nor permanent. Feasting, status ranking, and gift exchanges were integral to northern European diplomacy from ancient to medieval times, but caftan investiture was an alien tradition that only took root in ecclesiastical, not political ceremonies (Althoff 2004, 15–6, 152–4; Stewart Gordon 2001, 13). By the medieval period, cultural entanglements in Eastern Eurasia were ancient and ongoing.

This chapter demonstrates that contacts with Eurasia, and especially Turko-Mongol peoples, had a continuing impact on Sui and Tang diplomatic ceremonies. State

rituals were a living tradition undergoing continual reinterpretation in response to political conflicts and exigencies. Confucian ritual specialists sought to “set an agenda” for ceremonies that was austere and impersonal in order to emphasize the emperor’s role as head of a state bureaucracy (McDermott, ed. 1999, 3–8; McMullen 1987, 220–3). Sui and early Tang emperors seemed more likely to be ritual innovators, especially favoring grandiose ceremonies that included foreigners (McMullen 1987, 227–30). Imperial Chinese ceremonies often tended toward grandiloquent display, but Sui to mid-Tang rulers perhaps are more exceptional in using their prerogative to emphasize personal charisma, martiality, and cosmopolitanism in order to appeal to Turko-Mongols. For example, Sui Yangdi hosted a banquet for Türk clients in a massive tent, Taizong and Xuanzong hunted with tribal chiefs, and all entertained Turko-Mongols on lavish imperial tours.<sup>25</sup> These emperors also disseminated political symbols that conveyed a message of inclusiveness and even outright favor toward Turko-Mongols. Seemingly insignificant investiture regalia, such as iron fish tallies and polychrome caftans, subtly signaled that emperors held bridle chiefs in the highest esteem. This style of rule was not unique in Chinese history because it was shared with preceding and succeeding northern dynasties. Literati Confucians disapproved of many of these breaches of “proper” ritual protocol, but had only had limited success at persuading emperors until the post-An Lushan rebellion period.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, the medieval Confucian ritual program had sufficient ambiguity and flexibility to contain an increased cosmopolitan stress because “state rituals were made or used to bridge huge cultural gaps” (McDermott, ed. 1999, 4).

How to explicate the growing grandiosity and increased Turko-Mongol participation in rituals from the Sui through the middle of the Tang? Explanations include the wealth of the unified empire and increased military and administrative activities that required new bases of justification (McMullen 1987; Wechsler 1985, 232–5). Both factors were at play, but imperial expansion into the China-Inner Asia borderlands also played a role. Expansive empires, like the Sui and Tang, became increasingly wealthy and grew to include multiethnic agglomerations of people, giving rulers the means and motives to seek legitimacy from new audiences, especially militarily powerful Turko-Mongol peoples. Rulers who had a deep reservoir of symbols at their disposal were more likely to impress a wide variety of visitors from within and outside their realms. The process also was reversible. As imperial power, territory, and wealth diminished in the second half of the dynasty, the Tang court began to downplay martiality and cosmopolitanism. Ironically, this was a time when Inner Asian influence was growing in the virtually autonomous northeastern prefectures. Ritual inclusion of Turko-Mongols in the Sui-Tang “political family” waxed and waned according to the exigencies of court and imperial politics.

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PART THREE

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NEGOTIATING DIPLOMATIC  
RELATIONSHIPS

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## Negotiating Investiture

Investiture is an aspect of medieval Eurasian diplomacy that is not well understood. Scholars of Chinese foreign policy who have examined investiture consider it to be a nominal exercise, mainly intended to boost an emperor's prestige domestically (Bielenstein 2005, 6–7; Franke and Twitchett, eds. 1994, 14–6; Wang 2005, 17–32). An exception is Mori Masao (1967, 210–7), who demonstrates that changes in the titular forms reflected fluctuations in the balance of power. Mori nonetheless views imperial China as the wellspring of these practices. In contrast, this chapter will argue that medieval Eurasian diplomacy involved widely shared customs of forging alliances in the idiom of investiture or official appointment. Differing from modern diplomacy, in which international treaties adhere to the fiction that all states are equals, medieval Eurasian diplomacy usually made actual power differentials explicit. The rhetorical framework of agreements indicated the proper places of two rulers in a hierarchy, usually with one in the role of patron and the other in the role of the client who offered submission. The bonds could be expressed in various and overlapping types of nomenclature, including feudal (lord/vassal), bureaucratic (monarch/official), fictive kinship (father/son), and/or marital kinship (father-in-law/son-in-law) (Mori 1967, 161–210). The former two types will be treated in this chapter and the latter two in the next. Diplomacy may have been enveloped in common rhetorical forms, but as Mori has noted, *realpolitik* usually lay at its core. Although cases of Sui-Tang investiture of distant polities like Japan were divorced from geopolitical strategy (Wang 2005, 31–2), relations between neighboring peoples of Eastern Eurasia were continually renegotiated to reflect the changing multilateral balance of power and interests of two parties.

Other great powers in Eurasia also conferred titles on their outer clients as far west as the Sasanian and Roman/Byzantine realms. These arrangements generally were formalized and legitimized through a patron's investiture of vassal clients, who in turn might appoint their own vassals in hierarchically ramifying relationships. When a client ruler died, the patron claimed the exclusive right to invest a

successor.<sup>1</sup> Lattimore (1962, 535–41) used the term “frontier feudalism” to describe this phenomenon on the periphery of Chinese empires, but he was mistaken to assume that grants of agricultural land necessarily accompanied investiture of Turko-Mongol chiefs. Sneath (2007, 129–30) notes that European feudalism has unduly influenced the association between investiture and land holding, and that investiture on the steppe could signify control over people and livestock. This book views diplomatic investiture as a *formal* type of patrimonial patron-client bonding with political dynamics that can be compared profitably to the *informal* patron-client relationships discussed in chapter 3. Titles will be considered feudal if they confer or confirm an aristocratic status without necessarily involving landholding.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Investiture of Outer Clients

### A. Turko-Mongol Investiture

Investiture was a customary aspect of Turko-Mongol politics. A qaghan acted as a suzerain over clients, with the relationship formalized through the ceremonial bestowal of titles. When a qaghan conquered a tribe, he might invest new clients. For example, Bilgä Qaghan dispatched a general to attack the Qarluq because their leaders had submitted to the Tang and no longer sent caravans of tribute to the Türks. The Qarluq tribal leadership fled, so Bilgä Qaghan “gave titles to” and promoted “those who were low in rank” (Tekin 1968, 278). Evidently, the promotions were meant to cultivate a new leadership who would be the loyal clients of Bilgä Qaghan. In another case during the Second Türk Empire, Bars Beg of the Kirghiz received formal investiture as the qaghan of his tribe, but later he “betrayed” the Türks by starting “hostilities.” When Bilgä Qaghan’s troops defeated the Kirghiz, Bars Beg was killed and his people were “organized” (p. 235; Tekin 1968, 266, 269, 276). Though the nature of this “organization” is not specified, archaeological excavations demonstrate that Türk tribes began to live among the Kirghiz, probably to provide oversight (Klyashtorny 2004, 38). Qaghans also expected to receive the exclusive loyalty of their clients, which is why the Türks attacked the Qarluq after they gave allegiance to the Tang. Similarly, the Türk-Byzantine alliance of 568 was strained when the Avars, whom the First Türk Empire claimed as “slaves” or outer clients, submitted to Byzantine authority (Blockley 1985, 175–9). Among the Türks, qaghans gave differing degrees of independence to their tribal clients. Ultimately, a qaghan’s authority depended on the ability to project force.

Historical and anthropological studies have shown that Turko-Mongol rulers have the customary right to monopolize external affairs (Barfield 1993, 111). Table 6.1 confirms that contemporary Turkic rulers restricted their clients from making contacts with external powers. The table lists diplomatic missions from Mongolia-based Turkic khanates to the Tang court from 618 to 754 recorded in

**Table 6.1. Diplomatic Missions from Turkic Khanates of Mongolia to Tang Empire, 618–754 (Gray shading indicates diplomatic visits from non-ruling tribes of Mongolia)**

<i>Yr.</i>	<i>Origin of diplomatic mission</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>CFYG Reference</i>
618	Türks (three occasions)	Türks rule Inner and Outer Mongolia	970:3b
619	Türks		970:3b
620	Türks (two occasions)		970:4a
621	Türks		970:4a
622	Türks		970:5a
625	Türks		970:5b
626	Türks (two occasions)		970:5b
628	Türks		970:6a
	Tiele	Revolts against Türks; Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of Sir-Yantuo became ruler of Mongolia	970:6a
629	Sir-Yantuo		970:6a
	Pugu		970:6b
	Tongra		970:6b
630	Sir-Yantuo	Tang defeated Türks; Sir-Yantuo continued control of Mongolia	970:6b
631	Sir-Yantuo (three occasions)		970:6b-7a
632	Sir-Yantuo (two occasions)		970:7a
635	Sir-Yantuo (two occasions)		970:7b-8a
637	Sir-Yantuo		970:8b
638	Uighur		970:8b
639	Sir-Yantuo		970:9a
643	Sir-Yantuo (two occasions)		970:10a
644	Sir-Yantuo (two occasions)		970:10a
645	Sir-Yantuo		970:10a

(continued)

Table 6.1. (continued)

<i>Yr.</i>	<i>Origin of diplomatic mission</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>CFYG Reference</i>
647	Quirqan [of Tiele]	Tang and Tiele defeated Sir-Yantuo; Tiele submitted to Tang	970:12b
	Dubo of Tiele	CFYG mentions that this mission is a response to the Quriqan's four months earlier	970:12b-13a
	Türks (Chebi Qaghan)		970:13a
698	Türks		970:18a
703	Türks		970:18a
708	Türks (two occasions)		970:19b
712	Türks		970:20a
713	Türks (two occasions)		971:1a
714	Türks		971:1b
717	Türks	Qapaghan Qaghan assassinated ca. 715	971:2b
719	Toghuz-Oghuz, Tongra	Türks attacked Toghuz-Oghuz in 718	971:3b
724	Türks (two occasions)		971:6a
	Kirghiz	Harsh winter in Mongolia; Tribal revolts against Türks	971:6a
726	Türks (three occasions)		971:6b-7a
727	Türks (three occasions)		971:7a
730	Türks (two occasions)		971:8b
731	Türks		971:9a
732	Türks		971:9b
733	Türks (three occasions)		971:9b
734	Türks		971:10a
735	Türks		971:10b
737	Türks		971:12a
741	Türks		971:13b
742	Basmil	Basmil overthrew Türk rule	971:14a
744	Uighur leading Toghuz-Oghuz	Uighur overthrew Basmil	971:15a
	Qarluq		971:15a

Table 6.1. (continued)

Yr.	Origin of diplomatic mission	Background	CFYG Reference
747	Türks & Toghuz-Oghuz		971:16a
	Kirghiz		971:16a
748	Toghuz-Oghuz, Kirghiz, Shiwei		971:16b
749	Toghuz-Oghuz		971:17b
751	Toghuz-Oghuz & Uighur		971:18a
752	Uighur		971:18b
754	Toghuz-Oghuz & Uighur	Uighur achieved full control over Mongolia	971:19a

the chapters “Chaogong” (Imperial court tribute presentations) in *Cefu yuangui* (Ancient documents to aid the divining of the past, CFYG). The survey is not comprehensive because it excludes references to court visits dispersed among various other sources, but it provides a rough gauge to patterns of diplomatic activity. The trend that emerges is unmistakable. The Türks, Sir-Yantuo and Uighur, when ruling over Mongolia, normally succeeded in monopolizing diplomatic relations with Tang China. Breaks in exclusivity of control occur in 628–629, 647, 719, 724, and 744–754, which correlate with periods of disunity and warfare in Mongolia. During these times outer tribes, evidently aspiring to rule over Mongolia, sent diplomatic missions to Tang China seeking assistance. The only exception is a Uighur mission in 638, which may represent a secret attempt to gain Tang aid against their Sir-Yantuo masters.

Turkic qaghans also conferred various titles upon sedentary client-rulers. Ton Yabghu Qaghan of the Western Türks invested kings of subordinate oasis states as *eltäbärs* in the 620s (Beckwith 1987, 79, n. 136; Golden 1992, 135). Even earlier, a Chinese-language dedication to a Buddhist sutra, which is dated 599, proves that the ruler of Gaochang held the simultaneous titles of Chinese king (*wang*) and Turkic *eltäbär* (Jiang 1994, 35; Skaff 2002, 366). As discussed in chapter 4, the Türks invested many borderland warlords, who had taken Chinese titles, as subordinate qaghans. Taizong claimed that his father became a Türk client (*chen*) in 617 after revolting against the Sui and prior to founding the Tang Dynasty. Although some historians dispute this assertion because of a lack of corroborating evidence, at a minimum Gaozu made an indirect overture to Shibi Qaghan, indicating willingness to become a Türk client.<sup>3</sup> The Türks also maintained a puppet Sui court, including a grandson of Yangdi whom Chuluo Qaghan had invested as King of Sui (ZZTJ 188:5878; JTS 194a:5154; XTS 215a:6029). Some borderland clients received

lower-ranking titles. After one emperor-qaghan-warlord, Liu Wuzhou, was killed, Illig Qaghan designated Yuan Junzhang as Liu's successor. Yuan was given an obscure Chinese title of grand viceroy (*daxingtai*) rather than the more prestigious qaghan, perhaps because Yuan was more dependent on Türk support than Liu had been.<sup>4</sup> Yuan Junzhang needed Türk military assistance to protect his independence from the Tang.

The Türk investiture strategy during the Sui-Tang transition attempted to keep China divided and weak to facilitate conquest or raiding. In 620 Chuluo Qaghan devised a plan to emulate the Särbi founders of the Northern Wei Dynasty by invading and occupying North China. Investiture politics played a role in the strategy because the puppet Sui child king legitimized the offensive and borderland warlord clients supplied troops and staging grounds for an invasion. Some of the Türk leadership strongly opposed this scheme, preferring a Türk power base in the steppe (JTS 56:2280; XTS 87:3730; ZZTJ 188:5895–6). Chuluo's successor, Illig Qaghan, not surprisingly appears to have been a member of the anti-occupation camp who implemented a strategy of heavy raiding. Nonetheless, investiture politics still played a role in Illig's plans because the borderland warlords provided staging areas for attacks and sometimes participated in pillage (chapter 1; appendix A). Clearly, Chuluo and Illig's policy of investing North China elites with titles served as a diplomatic complement to their military strategies vis-à-vis China.

Chuluo Qaghan's plan to use a Sui puppet-king to justify an invasion was not an isolated occurrence. A century later, the Türgish qaghan Sulu's army included Khusrau b. Yazdigird, a descendant of the Sasanian imperial family that the Muslim Arabs had overthrown in Iran.<sup>5</sup> During a Türgish attack on Samarqand in the late 720s, Khusrau tried to persuade a besieged Muslim garrison to surrender, saying, "Oh Arabs, why do you kill yourselves when I have brought the Qaghan to restore my kingdom to me? I will obtain free passage for you [to the main Arab forces]" (Ṭabarī 2:1518; Beckwith 1987, 109; Blankinship 1989, 56; Gibb [1923] 1970, 71). Although the garrison scoffed at Khusrau's offer because he was Zoroastrian pretender to a throne that the Muslims had overthrown, his main responsibility probably was to appeal to the Persian émigrés who had fled to Sogdia in wake of the Muslim conquests (Frye 1996, 214–7). Despite the stereotypical image of Turkic peoples as greedy warriors who were solely focused on pillage, Turko-Mongol investiture and manipulation of puppet rulers demonstrates their willingness to use diplomacy to achieve political and military aims.

### B. Sui-Tang Investiture

Sui-Tang investiture practices generally were analogous to Turko-Mongol practices, but the more plentiful sources on diplomatic activities allow finer analysis of the form and purpose of patron-outer client relations. All aspirants to power during periods of civil war in China participated in investiture politics. The career of the

warlord Gao Kaidao, mentioned in chapter 3, provides many examples of the acceptance of investiture in North China. Soon after becoming leader of a band of rebels, Gao submitted to a rebel Buddhist monk who had declared himself emperor, taken a nun as empress, and established a kingdom based on Buddhist law. The Buddhist ruler invested Gao Kaidao as King of Qi. A few months later, Gao killed the monk-emperor and declared himself King of Yan. In 620 Gao rendered fealty to Tang Gaozu, who recognized Gao's de facto independence by appointing him Yu Prefecture Commander-in-Chief. A few years later Gao broke with the Tang to reestablish the independent kingdom of Yan under Türk suzerainty. By 624 as the Tang consolidated power in China, Gao sensed that it would have been most advantageous to break with the Türks and reestablish fealty to the new dynasty, but feared being punished for his past treachery. In the end, faced with internal rebellion, he committed suicide (JTS 55:2256–7; XTS 86:3714–5; ZZTJ 188:5892, 189:5939–40; Skaff 2004, 127–8). Despite Gao Kaidao's humble background, he adhered to the Eurasian custom of signaling each new political alignment with a change of investiture title.

Sui and Tang rulers and Turko-Mongol elites also sought to create mutually advantageous strategic alliances through investiture. For example, Sui Yangdi invested Qimin Qaghan, who profited from the arrangement because the Sui helped him to build a power base in Inner Mongolia and provided military support against Türk rivals in Mongolia. Qimin even treated the relationship as sacrosanct by refusing to meet a diplomatic envoy from Koguryō (SS 84:1875). The Sui derived benefits from having a client providing defensive support in the empire's northern borderlands (Pan 1997, 100–15). Although the exclusive loyalty of client to patron was widely esteemed, numerous examples below prove that the ideal frequently was ignored.

The strategic implications of investiture were crucial to the two parties. This is immediately apparent in the relations between the Tang and Sir-Yantuo in 628. When the Turkic tribes in Mongolia threw off Türk rule, they proclaimed the leader of the Sir-Yantuo, Yi'nan, as their new qaghan, but the Türks under Illig Qaghan remained a threat to the south in Inner Mongolia. The Tang and Sir-Yantuo formed an anti-Türk alliance that was signaled when Taizong sent a letter of investiture (*ceshu*) recognizing Yi'nan as Zhenzhu Bilgä "Genuine Pearl of Wisdom" Qaghan. (JTS 199b:5344; ZZTJ 192:6061; CFYG 964:1b). Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan sought seemingly redundant Tang investiture to obtain wider recognition of his legitimacy and to reduce the threat of Türk attacks on his southern frontier. The Tang also benefited strategically from the arrangement. When Tang armies attacked the Türks in 630, Illig and his followers were unable to flee to the Mongolian steppe. Although the alliance provided mutual benefits, both parties accepted a hierarchically structured relationship.

Tang-Khitan relations illustrate how tribal factionalism could vastly complicate the negotiations of patron-client bonds. In a decree written late in 734, Xuanzong



addressed the Khitan puppet-king Li Jule (or Qulie) and Ketuyu, who was the true power behind the throne. Xuanzong offered peace in return for allegiance, which he defined as monarch-official relations. The decree also mentioned that the top Tang military official in the northeast, Zhang Shougui, was delegated with the authority to handle the details of negotiations (QJW 285:1b–2a; QJJ 8:12b–13a; Herbert 1978, 74–5, 82). In response, Ketuyu sent an envoy to Zhang with a false promise to submit to Xuanzong. When a Tang ambassador, Wang Hui, went to the Khitan to finalize the agreement, Ketuyu stalled. He gradually moved his camp to the northwest and sent envoys to the Türks in Mongolia, evidently hoping to strike a more favorable deal. Ketuyu's overtures proved futile probably because the recent assassination of Bilgä Qaghan had weakened the Second Türk Empire irredeemably. Meanwhile, Wang Hui formed an alliance with another Khitan elite, Li Guozhe, who made a night raid, killing Ketuyu, the puppet king, and several dozen of Ketuyu's clients (JTS 199b:5353; XTS 219:6171; ZZTJ 214:6807). Wang's success was transitory because another tribal elite, Nili, killed the newly enthroned Li Guozhe and all of his sons. Despite the adverse turn of events, Xuanzong pragmatically sent a decree to Nili reopening negotiations. He chastised Nili for killing Li Guozhe, but offered an appointment as commander-in-chief. Using a carrot and stick approach, Xuanzong promised a monetary reward if the offer was accepted, but made a veiled threat to attack in the event of a refusal. Nili accepted the offer (JTS 199b:5353; XTS 219:6171; ZZTJ 214:6812; QJW 285:2a–3a; QJJ 9:2b–3b; Herbert 1978, 75, 83–4). Stability in Tang-Khitan relations was achieved only after elements of the Khitan elite engaged in internecine bloodletting, made overtures to the Türks, and received the Tang's veiled threats and promises of rewards. Xuanzong's decrees are notable for consistently making offers in the idiom of patron-client ties, seeking relationships with individuals—Ketuyu, Li Guozhe, and Nili—not the Khitan as a corporate entity. Khitan elites were seeking clientage with an external ruler who would best guarantee their personal power. Xuanzong was searching for a loyal adherent who was dynamic enough to control the tribal elite.

Turko-Mongol elites who were involved in internal power struggles sometimes actively sought investiture to gain an advantage over their rivals, but the Sui and Tang did not necessarily become involved. Around 640, the Western Türks were embroiled in a conflict between the rival qaghans Yipi Tardush (Yipi duolu) and Ishbara Yabghu (Shaboluo *yehu*). In 641 Ishbara sent an envoy to the Tang court to request trade relations and investiture as qaghan of the Western Türks. Taizong decided to reject his proposal in part because Ishbara lacked firm command of the tribes, and backing a potential loser would hurt Tang prestige. Taizong appears to have made the correct move because Yipi Tardush defeated Ishbara soon thereafter (ZZTJ 196:6168). The Tang court's refusal to confer investiture effectively signaled a position of neutrality at a time when the court was not prepared to intervene militarily.

Qaghans in a strong internal position also might seek investiture to gain strategic advantage in external affairs. This appears to have been the case of Qapaghan

Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire. In the early years of his rule, Qapaghan only raided China in 694, perhaps because he did not have full command over his tribes. Empress Wu invested him with the relatively modest title of duke in 695. In the following year when the Khitan attacked Hebei, Empress Wu agreed to invest Qapaghan as qaghan in return for a punitive attack on the Khitan (ZZTJ 205:6509–10; JTS 194a:5168; XTS 215a:6045). Although ostensibly demeaning, becoming the outer client of Empress Wu allowed Qapaghan to expand power when he conquered the Khitan and used their domain as a staging ground for massive raids on Hebei (chapter 1). Acceptance of investiture was a stratagem that allowed him simultaneously to gain an advantage over his apparent benefactor, Empress Wu, and a neighboring power, the Khitan.

### C. Puppet Rulers: A Case Study of the Western Türks

Like Turko-Mongols, the Tang in some cases tried to use puppet rulers to exert authority. Most known cases involve the Western Türks. After the Tang conquest of the Western Türks in 657, Gaozong successfully invested two client qaghans to rule over their ten subordinate On Oq tribes. Ashina Mishe headed the five eastern tribes and his cousin, Ashina Buzhen, controlled the five western tribes (JTS 194b:5187–9; XTS 215b:6064; ZZTJ 200:6301–8; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 36–7, 68–71). Prior to their appointments, the two qaghans had split time between the steppe and service in the Tang capital guard corps, but their heirs had spent most of their lives at the Tang capital. In 685, Empress Wu dispatched Ashina Mishe's son, Yuanqing, and Ashina Buzhen's son, Khusrau, to inherit their fathers' respective wings of the Western Türks. Yuanqing failed to attract adherents among the five eastern tribes, suffered a military defeat, and fled to Chang'an (JTS 97:3046, 194b:5189; XTS 215b:6064–5; QTW 205:20b; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 41–2, 76, 187). Ashina Khusrau had moderate success in establishing himself over his father's five western tribes, but in 690 he was forced to retreat to the interior with about sixty thousand followers, due to attacks from the nascent Second Türk Empire (ZZTJ 204:6469; JTS 194b:5190). Subsequent attempts to impose Khusrau and his son, Ashina Huaidao, failed in 699 and 700 because the formerly subordinate Türgish now dominated the On Oq (JTS 97:3046, 194b:5190; XTS 215b:6065; ZZTJ 206:6545, 207:6562–3, 6569; QTW 205:21a; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 41, 76, 188).

The repeated failures to invest clients to rule over the Western Türks in the late seventh century led to a change of strategy. Zhongzong resorted to using Ashina Huaidao to assert purely symbolic ritual authority over the new leader of the Türgish, Saqal (r. 707–ca. 712, Chin: Suoge).<sup>6</sup> Serving in dual capacities as titular qaghan and diplomatic envoy in 707, Huaidao invested Saqal with the Tang titles of General-in-Chief of the Left Courageous Guard, Chief Minister of the Court of Regalia, and Commandery Prince (JTS 194b:5190; XTS 215b:6066; CFYG

964:11a; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 43, 79, [1904] 1969, 27). As a result of this investiture, Saqal became the subordinate of the Tang emperor and Ashina Huaidao remained the nominal qaghan of the Western Türks. A more drastic alteration in Tang policy toward the Türgish occurred after the frontier general, Guo Yuanzhen, wrote a memorial in 708 critical of the strategy of investing puppet qaghans. In the memorial, Guo explained the repeated failures of the Tang *and* Tibet to place Ashina clients over the Western Türks (JTS 97:3046–7, QTW 205:21a):

These descendants [of the royal qaghanal line] do not have the ability to provide for their followers. Their sense of benevolence and righteousness has clearly come to an end, so the people's hearts do not reach out to them. [Tang-invested qaghans] who come are not able to pacify [Western Türk tribes] and only cause problems for the [Tang military's] Four Garrisons [of the Tarim Basin]. Therefore it is evident that investing the descendants of qaghans is not a policy that will attract the Ten Tribes [of the On Oq].

Guo Yuanzhen describes the problems with the strategy of investing aristocratic outsiders as qaghan. Titular rulers did not have the ability to attract nomadic followers because they were spending much of their lives in the Tang capital. They no longer could understand and relate to tribesmen whom their ancestors had once ruled. Guo's criticism initially was ignored, which led to a failed military venture in 708 to replace Saqal with yet another scion, Ashina Xian. Chastened by this turn of events, Zhongzong invested Saqal as "Qaghan Rendering Allegiance to [Chinese] Civilization" in 709 (Skaff 2009a, 172). This marked an abandonment of the puppet strategy and the first Tang recognition of a non-Ashina qaghan ruling over the On Oq.

Xuanzong periodically revived the policy of attempting to invest Western Türk puppets as qaghans reigning over the On Oq. The final attempt came when the emperor dispatched Ashina Huaidao's son, Ashina Xin, to reimpose rule in 740. This infuriated Bagha Tarqan Kül Chor (Mohe dagan quelü chuo), who was responsible for assassinating the former Türgish qaghan, Sulu. Bagha Tarqan insinuated that investiture had been promised to him, "Originally I was the chief conspirator in the defeat of Sulu. Is making Shi [Ashina] Xin the monarch how your country recompenses my merit?" (JTS 194b:5192). Bagha Tarqan drove off Ashina Xin, and a few years later killed him. Afterwards, Xin's wife and son returned to the Tang capital. Xuanzong finally relented and appointed Bagha Tarqan as qaghan (JTS 194b:5192; XTS 215b:6066–9; ZZTJ 214:6841, 6843; Beckwith 1987, 125, n. 105; Skaff 1998b, 319–21). This incident seems to have finally convinced Xuanzong that it was not feasible to appoint Ashina clients over the On Oq tribes. Thereafter he was content to invest indigenous Türgish leaders as qaghan, even as the Türgish became increasingly enfeebled.<sup>7</sup>

Tang attempts to use puppet qaghans to subjugate the On Oq, like similar Türk efforts involving the Sui boy king and Türgish use of a Sasanian heir, were not particularly successful. Most puppets must have harbored dreams of restored power and wealth, but they rarely could achieve this goal because their status as exiles made them overly reliant on outside support. Still, the imposition of puppet rulers as a diplomatic tactic demonstrates a shared Eurasian belief that royal heirs had an intrinsic charisma that potentially might legitimize outside intervention.

#### D. Grand Strategy: A Case Study of the Türgish

Tang-Türgish relations in the early eighth century can further clarify the role of investiture in interstate competition. Although direct statements of the strategic interests of Tang Xuanzong and Sulu of the Türgish are extant only for the former, a careful investigation of Chinese and Arabic historical sources can illuminate the connection between investiture negotiations and external military and diplomatic policies. One scholar who has investigated Tang-Türgish relations dismisses investiture as a “traditional Chinese ploy of granting official titles” in order to “mollify the Turks and gain some sort of influence at their court” (Beckwith 1987, 89). In contrast, this section demonstrates that the Tang and Türgish mutually recognized investiture negotiations as a means of signaling diplomatic intent.

The Türgish emerged from the eastern wing of the ten On Oq tribes by the start of the eighth century to become the new leader of the tribal union. They originally inhabited the territory around the Ili and Chu River valleys, which presently are divided among northern Kyrgyzstan, southeastern Kazakhstan, and northwestern Xinjiang (JTS 194b:5190; XTS 215b:6066; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 43) (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). The background of the Türgish rise was the chaotic state of the Western Türks in the last three decades of the seventh century. Under the qaghans Ocirlıq (r. ca. 699–707, Chin: Wuzhile), his son Saqal, and Saqal’s general, Sulu, the Türgish asserted authority over the On Oq.<sup>8</sup> Ocirlıq captured Süyab from the Tang puppet qaghan Ashina Khusrau in 703, turned it into his primary capital, and became a Tang client by 705.

Sulu’s rise came in the wake of the Second Türk Empire’s invasion of the western steppe and killing of Saqal around 710. After the Türks withdrew, internecine fighting occurred among the Türgish, ending with Sulu’s proclaiming himself qaghan in 716. As mentioned in chapter 1, under Sulu’s leadership the Türgish reached their pinnacle of power with an army of two hundred thousand soldiers. Strategically, Türgish rulers directly confronted three great powers—the Tang to the southeast, Umayyad Caliphate to the southwest, and Second Türk Empire to the northeast. The Tibetans in the south were potentially an ally against the Tang or Umayyads (JTS 194b:5190; Wang 1991, 100). The most likely targets of Türgish hostility were the Umayyad and Tang empires, which occupied the Silk Road oasis cities that had been major sources of income for the Western Türks a century earlier. Empress

Wu had dispatched forces to retake the Tarim Basin and its oasis cities from Tibet in 692 and reestablished the Anxi Protectorate with a total of thirty thousand garrison troops (JTS 40:1647–50, 198:5304; XTS 40:1047–8, 43b:1134–7, 66:1861; ZZTJ 213:6773) (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). The Umayyad Caliphate had conquered the Sogdian oasis states, most importantly Bukhara and Samarqand, which became the eastern edge of the Islamic empire (Barthold [1928] 1968, 180–96; Gibb [1923] 1970, 29–58) (Map 6.1). When Sulu came to power, the oasis cities must have seemed like tempting but dangerous targets.

Relations between Sulu and Xuanzong initially were rocky as the two rulers provoked and tested each other with a series of diplomatic slights. Sulu requested Tang investiture as qaghan and marriage to a princess, but Xuanzong's refusal of Türgish tribute in July 717 expressed his unwillingness to meet Sulu's demands (chapter 5). In retaliation Sulu rejected Xuanzong's offers of appointment to military positions. Attempting a compromise, Xuanzong dispatched an envoy to invest Sulu with a title of nobility as duke of state (rank 1b) and bestow two thousand bolts of silk and other valuables to "pacify and show concern for him." In addition, Xuanzong warned his generals, "if [Sulu] does not wish to accept [the title and gifts], attack to show strength" (JTS 194b:5191; XTS 133:4544, 215b:6067; CFYG 157:18a-b; QTW 40:17a). Before the Tang envoy had a chance to deliver the message, Sulu invaded the Tang-controlled Tarim Basin with the aid of Tibet. Ashina Xian led a Tang force of Qarluq cavalry that drove the Türgish from the Tarim, but did not dislodge Sulu from power (XTS 215b:6065; ZZTJ 211:6727–8; CFYG 992:7a-b; Beckwith 1987, 88; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 78; Skaff 1998b, 123, n. 90). With neither side able to strike a decisive blow, a compromise was struck in June 718. Xuanzong sent an envoy to invest Sulu as duke of state and appoint him to high military positions. There are no records of warfare over the next year, so presumably to signal warming relations, Xuanzong invested Sulu as qaghan in December, 719 and formally recognized Süyāb as the Türgish capital (XTS 215b:6067; ZZTJ 212:6737; CFYG 964:14b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 42).<sup>9</sup> They also grew closer via kinship ties, involving fictive father-son relations and Sulu's marriage to a Tang princess in 723, to be discussed in the next chapter.

The mutual concessions explain the generally peaceful relations between the two sides enduring until 734. Xuanzong once explained his perspective on the relationship, "the Qaghan received investiture in order to perpetually serve as Our country's rearguard" (QJJ 11:6a; QTW 286:10b; WYYH 471:10a). Though Xuanzong exaggerated Sulu's loyalty, the Tang gained benefits during the 720s by being able to give greater attention to the more immediate threats of the Tibetan and Second Türk empires (chapter 1). Arabic sources are the key to understanding Türgish motives. Having secured his eastern flank with Tang investiture, Sulu turned his attention to capturing the Sogdian oasis states that had fallen to the Umayyad Caliphate. Wrestling these wealthy trade cities from the Arabs was meant to increase the flow of wealth into Sulu's treasury.



Map 6.1. Lands of the Western Türks and Sogdia



Sulu may have prepared for his invasion with secret diplomacy because Sogdian nobles (*dihqāns*) swore allegiance to him when Türgish incursions commenced in the spring of 721. When the Türgish withdrew later in the year, they left their local allies in control of all of Sogdia except Samarqand.<sup>10</sup> After a setback when Umayyad reinforcements retook Sogdia in spring of 722, the tide turned in favor of the Türgish in 724 when Sulu's troops, including men from the oases of Farghānah and Shāsh, repulsed Muslim forces at Farghānah (Balādhurī, 428; Ṭabarī 2: 1441–9, 1478–9; Beckwith 1987, 94–7; Blankinship 1989, 14–16; Gibb [1923] 1970, 62–6; Powers 1989, 172–80). Sulu's Sogdian campaigns were interrupted in 726 when war broke out with the Tang due to a trade dispute (chapter 9). When peace with the Tang was restored, Sulu's forces besieged Samarqand in 729 and 731 with an army that included inhabitants of Sogdia, Shāsh, and Farghānah. By the end of these campaigns the Türgish and local allies controlled most of Sogdia except the walled cities of Bukhara and Samarqand (Ṭabarī 2:1507–25, 1532–53; Blankinship 1989, 45–62, 71–89; Gibb [1923] 1970, 68–79).<sup>11</sup> Throughout these attacks, Tang investiture had strategic value that allowed Sulu to divert troops from his eastern flank to the war against the Umayyads. After Sulu had achieved most of his goals in Sogdia, he turned his gaze to the east, where the Tang occupied the oasis cities of the Tarim Basin. Sulu's hostilities with the Tang, which began in 735, will be discussed in chapter 9.

Xuanzong's investiture of Sulu also sent a signal recognizable to local rulers of Sogdia and Tukhāristān. The King of Bukhara complained in a letter to Xuanzong of March 719 that the Arabs "plundered" his people and requested that the Tang emperor dispatch the Türgish to lend help (CFYG 999:15b–16a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 203–4). In another case the ruler of Tukhāristān wrote a letter in 727 asking Xuanzong to verify Sulu's claims that the Tang had "entrusted the affairs of the West" to the Türgish in order "to drive off the Arabs" (CFYG 999:17b–18a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 206–7). The uncertainty about the Tang-Türgish relationship must have arisen after their mutual conflict in 726 (chapter 9). Both local rulers recognized that Xuanzong's investiture of Sulu had significant diplomatic implications.

## II. Tang Appointment of Bridle Officials

The Sui had adhered to the common Eurasian practice of investing clients with native titles of nobility. However, as discussed in chapter 2, following Taizong's decision to exercise authority over the Türks in 630, the Tang instituted a policy encouraging friendly Turko-Mongols to submit to Tang rule in the China-Inner Asia borderlands as bridle tribes. Indigenous leaders were appointed to Tang official positions, creating a new idiom of patron-client bonding. In the eyes of the court, Turko-Mongol leaders who were Tang bridle officials had a lower status than independent monarchs receiving investiture.



Military cooperation was a major motive for both parties to forge a relationship. One Tang officer is reputed to have said, “the reason [my] country provides [Turko-Mongol] monarchs with high offices and generous salaries is that these monarchs command tribes with multitudes of soldiers.”<sup>12</sup> The example of the “Three Qarluq” tribes, who deserted the Türks to submit to the Tang in 714, demonstrates that strategic benefits could be mutual. Xuanzong appointed each of their three rulers to serve as commanders-in-chief. For example, one Qarluq leader, Zhusi, received commission as Commander-in-Chief (rank 2b) of the Great [Gobi] Desert Area Command north of Beiting (see chapter 1, Map 1.4) (JTS 194a:5172; XTS 215a:6048; ZZTJ 211:6705). Soon after, the emperor ordered Tang generals to coordinate with the Qarluq leaders to repel ongoing attacks from the Türks in the east (ZZTJ 211:6709–10). The Qarluq returned the favor in 717 when the Tang general of royal Türk descent, Ashina Xian, led a force of Qarluq cavalry southward to drive the Türgish from the Tarim Basin (XTS 215b:6065; ZZTJ 211:6727–8; CFYG 992:7a-b; Beckwith 1987, 88; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 78; Skaff 1998b, 123, n. 90). Both sides benefitted militarily from the relationship.

### A. Negotiated Relationships

During times of political and economic instability on the steppe, it was not unusual for individuals, tribes, or tribal unions, like the Qarluq, to migrate in search of a new patron who could provide leadership and stability. The prospective master might be a Turko-Mongol elite or the Tang emperor. Both sides felt tension upon the arrival of the tribe. Tang officers would wonder whether it was a true surrender or an ambush. The Turko-Mongol party would worry about whether they would be accepted or attacked. The tension caused by the unexpected arrival of a tribal contingent on the frontier is palpable in the fragments of a document from borderland Shazhou Prefecture (Dunhuang) dating to Empress Wu’s reign. It may be related to political turmoil in Tibet in 699 that caused several surrenders totaling almost ten thousand Tuyuhun tents (ZZTJ 206:6539–40; Chen Guocan 2002, 153; Beckwith 1987, 60–1). The fragmentary text describes the “Tuyuhun Qaghan” and commoners camped at Moli River as probably worried about a Tibetan attack at their rear and the possibility of a hostile Tang reception. In order to negotiate surrender, the qaghan sent an intermediary, He Hongde, who is described as a “tribal? ([. . .] *luo*) foreigner (*fanren*), Guazhou commoner.” In other words, though described as a foreigner, he was a Tang subject, probably living a tribal (i.e., pastoral nomadic) lifestyle, who had the linguistic and cultural knowledge to act as a go-between. Guazhou was a borderland prefecture bordering Shazhou in the east, where various ethnicities mingled (see chapter 1, Map 1.2). The Tang commanders of Shazhou’s local garrison forces, which probably only had several thousand troops, were worried that they did not have sufficient personnel because of reports of one hundred thousand Tuyuhun. They requested reinforcements from Guazhou’s Moli Army (Moli *jun*)

garrison, which had a similar number of forces on hand. The unknown officer or scribe who wrote one surviving snippet from this time muses, “must devise an excellent strategy” (72TAM225:38, 33, 26 in TCWS 7:233–9; TCWS—plates 3:412–4; Chen Guocan 2002, 153).<sup>13</sup> The outcome of the incident is unknown, but if it was related to the events of 699, the Tuyuhun were peacefully incorporated into the Tang Empire. The leader of the largest group of refugees, Mgar Gongren, led seven thousand tents of followers. Empress Wu appointed him to serve as a general of the imperial bodyguard and concurrently invested him as Jiuquan Commandery Prince (ZZTJ 206:6539–40; Beckwith 1987, 60–1). The latter title of nobility indicates that the Tuyuhun families remained in the region around Jiuquan in Suzhou, directly to the east of Guazhou (JTS 40:1642; XTS 40:1045–6; YHJX 40:1022–8). Mgar Gongren also represents an interesting case of a Tibetan acting as patron to Mongolic-speaking Tuyuhun clients.

The outcome of a tribe’s offer of submission often appears to have depended upon the personality, skills, and predilections of Tang officials and military commanders in the borderlands. An incident several months after the Tang conquered the First Türk Empire in 630 demonstrates the importance of personal relationships. In this case, some impoverished members of the Sijie tribe of the Tiele tribal union arrived in the borderland periphery of Shuozhou in northern Hedong, and offered submission to the local prefect, Zhang Jian. When Zhang was transferred to a new post, his successor became suspicious that the Sijie were going to rebel because they kept in touch with fellow tribespeople who had remained in Mongolia. Taizong dispatched Zhang as a special envoy to investigate the situation. He rode alone to the Sijie to demonstrate sincerity and lack of fear. The tribe subsequently agreed to follow Zhang to his next post in Daizhou, also in northern Hedong. Apparently, the Sijie had become poor because their herds were diminished. Zhang encouraged them to begin practicing agriculture. The Tang benefitted from the arrangement because the Sijie had a bumper harvest and sold part of their yield to Zhang, who used the grain to supply frontier troops (JTS 83:2775–6; XTS 111:4133; ZZTJ 193:6082).

The Sijie’s experiences demonstrate the highly personal and contingent nature of a tribe’s submission. Only part of the tribe arrived at the Tang borderlands seeking a new situation to escape their poverty, while others remained in Mongolia. The tribespeople offered submission to Zhang Jian, not the distant Taizong or the more abstract Tang Empire. Zhang became the link attaching them to the empire. His willingness to personally meet the Sijie, demonstrating bravery and sincerity, appears to have been a fairly common technique for frontier officials to defuse tensions with borderland tribes. Taizong’s encounter with Illig Qaghan at the Bian Bridge on the Wei River west of Chang’an in 626 is the most famous exhibition of personal charisma during the Tang. According to Taizong, he rode out alone to show that he did not fear the Türks, but placed heavy forces in the rear to demonstrate readiness to fight (JTS 194a:5157–8; XTS 215a:6033; ZZTJ 191:6019–20).

Xuanzong later valued frontier officials and generals who could maintain good relations with borderland tribes, but frontier commanders sometimes could use knowledge of the emperor's preferences to manipulate him. When An Sishun, the cousin of An Lushan, was to be replaced as military commissioner of Hexi in 750, he conspired with the local "barbarians" (*hu*) to make a dramatic display of grief in front of a visiting censor. They slashed their ears and faces with knives in accordance with contemporary Turkic mourning customs (JTS 104:3206).<sup>14</sup> After receiving the censor's report, Xuanzong changed his mind and allowed An Sishun to remain in Hexi. Xuanzong's inclination to appease frontier peoples by honoring their preferences for personal political relationships parallels Taizong's willingness to send Zhang Jian to conciliate the Sijie more than a century earlier.

Sometimes the decision to accept newly arrived Turko-Mongols as bridle subjects could be controversial because of negative stereotyping or legitimate fears that the nomads were feigning submission to seek plunder. Taizong had overridden much exclusionist sentiment at court to implement the original system of bridle rule after his victory over the Türks in 630. During the next century, some exclusivist Tang frontier officers intentionally or unintentionally undermined relationships with tribes. An example of an official who favored harsher measures was Wang Jun (ca. 660–732), who was a member of an eminent family and had passed Confucian civil service examinations. Wang mainly held civil posts early in his career and only received appointments on the frontier military from about 710 (JTS 93:2985–9; XTS 72b:2648, 111:4153–6). He represented a trend from Empress Wu's reign through the middle of Xuanzong's of drawing some frontier military officers from among the ranks of civil officials who had entered government by passing exams.

Wang was in charge of frontier defenses in Hedong when Mongolia was thrown into disarray by the assassination of Qapaghan Qaghan in 715. Various tribes began to arrive at different locations in the Tang northern borderlands. Some Türks were allowed to relocate within the great bend of the Yellow River in northern Guannei. A number of frontier generals and allied bridle chiefs believed that the Türk Empire had been destroyed and reported that the surrendered tribes were peaceful. In a memorial Wang raised suspicion that those who gave a positive evaluation of the situation had ulterior motives. Moreover, he made a valid point that the circumstance of 715—in which rival leaders in Mongolia still were vying for the loyalty of the Turkic tribes—differed from 630, when Taizong had conquered the First Türk Empire. Wang argued that the Türks had submitted in 715 because of disorder in their land, but could not be trusted because "beneath their exterior is an enemy." Even though he was in Hedong, Wang claimed to have intelligence from across the Yellow River in the Ordos that the tribes were ignoring orders, attacking Tang troops, and erecting illicit beacon towers.<sup>15</sup> Wang also reported that Türk spies hid among them. Wang revived the radically inclusivist argument from the debates of 630 that the solution to the problem was to relocate the Türks to South China to become farmers. Before the emperor had a chance to reply, some tribes in the Ordos

revolted and fled to Mongolia to submit to Bilgä Qaghan. Wang led reinforcements west across the Yellow River and was involved in killing fifteen hundred enemies, and capturing fourteen hundred people, along with a large number of livestock (JTS 93:2986–8, 194a:5172–3; XTS 111:4154–5, 215b:6051; ZZTJ 211:6709–10, 6720–2; QTW 298:1a). As a reward, he was appointed head of troops stationed at the site of his victory in northern Guannei.

Wang continued harsh treatment of some bridle tribes, but not all frontier commanders agreed with these practices. In 720, Wang believed that two Toghuz-Oghuz tribes camping around the northern loop of the Yellow River were plotting to collude with the Türks to pillage cities in the region. Wang sent a secret memorial requesting to put them to death. The emperor apparently decided that Wang's intelligence was valid because in autumn Wang lured over eight hundred tribal leaders to a banquet where Tang troops ambushed and killed them. Meanwhile, to the east in Hedong two other Toghuz-Oghuz tribes became alarmed and restless after hearing of Wang's actions. Zhang Yue, who was military chief of the region, was able to placate them by riding out with an entourage of twenty horsemen and staying in their tents (JTS 93:2988; XTS 111:4155–6; ZZTJ 212:6740–1). Once again, a face-to-face display of fearlessness and sincerity was the key to guaranteeing the loyalty of tribespeople. Zhang Yue's frontier diplomacy paid off in the following year when these Toghuz-Oghuz tribes of northern Hedong supplied cavalry to help Wang Jun suppress another rebellion in Guannei (CFYG 986:20b; T'ZLJB 33:1471). The case of Zhang Yue demonstrates that in some contexts literati Confucians were able and willing to implement cosmopolitan networking strategies.

## B. Strong and Weak Attachments

From the perspective of the Tang court, tribal management could be a headache that entailed discerning the intentions of various frontier military commanders and Turko-Mongol chiefs, each with his own interests that might diverge from the court's. Negotiations were ongoing. The payoff, justifying the nuisances, was a ready supply of highly skilled cavalry available to meet military exigencies. Below, two case studies from the seventh and eighth centuries will demonstrate the complicated political and military maneuvering needed to keep Turko-Mongol tribes attached to the borderlands of the Tang realm.

### 1. *Tiele/Toghuz-Oghuz/Uighur*

The Tiele, later reconfigured and called the Toghuz-Oghuz, were an important tribal union originally subject to the First Türk Empire.<sup>16</sup> The Uighur were a leading tribe of both unions. After participating in the successful revolt in Mongolia against the Türks in 627, the Tiele came under the authority of Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo (JTS 195:5195; XTS 217a:6111; ZZTJ 192:6045, 6049).

Subsequently in 646, the Uighur led a successful Tiele revolt against the Sir-Yantuo with Tang military assistance (JTS 199b:5346–7; ZZTJ 198:6236–8). Tumidu Eltäbär of the Uighur and several thousand Tiele chiefs travelled to Lingzhou where they proclaimed Taizong their Heavenly Qaghan (chapter 4). Rather than investing Tumidu as qaghan, Taizong appointed him as commander-in-chief of the Hanhai Area Command in Mongolia. Other elites received positions as commanders-in-chief, prefects, and lesser functionaries under jurisdiction of relatively distant Yanran Protectorate (later called Xishouxiang), located in Inner Mongolia northwest of the great bend of the Yellow River (see chapter 1, Map 1.4) (Xue 1992, 406). Tumidu had a great deal of autonomy, and the Tang court turned a blind eye when the Tiele declared Tumidu was their qaghan without Tang investiture. When a nephew assassinated Tumidu in 648, the Tang's Yanran Vice Protector-General, Yuan Lichen, captured and executed the nephew after luring him with a promise of appointment to Tumidu's posts. Taizong subsequently dispatched an envoy to appoint Tumidu's son Porun to his father's former positions, invest him with the Turkic title of *eltäbär*, and bestow gifts (JTS 195:5197; XTS 217a:6113; ZZTJ 198:6242–3).

In the following decade, the Tang and Porun continued reciprocally beneficial relations. Both sides profited from the arrangement strategically as they proceeded to destroy their mutual enemies. In 650 Tang, Uighur, and Pugu troops combined to defeat a member of the royal Türk Ashina lineage, Chebi Qaghan, based north of the Altai, who threatened Porun's hold on power in Mongolia (JTS 194a:5165; XTS 215a:6041; ZZTJ 199:6265–6, 6271–2). In return, Porun provided the Tang with tens of thousands of cavalry troops for the campaigns against the Western Türks in the 650s. Porun personally participated as a vice commander when Tang troops defeated the Western Türks in 657 (JTS 83:2778, 194b:5186, 195:5197; XTS 215b:6061, 110:4119, 111:4137; ZZTJ 199:6274–5, 200:6301). However, relations cooled after the death of Porun in 661. Porun's successor fought a brief war against the Tang that ended when Qibi Heli brokered peace (JTS 195:5197–8; ZZTJ 200:6326–9). Thereafter, the Tiele disappeared from Tang historical record for two decades, leaving no evidence of cooperation or conflict (Feng and Wu 1992, 18; Xue 1992, 422–9).<sup>17</sup> If Tang bridle rule continued during this interregnum, relations were perfunctory and merely signaled mutual non-hostility.

The rise of the Second Türk Empire changed the ill-defined status quo. The Türks defeated the Uighur and their reconfigured tribal union, now called Toghuz-Oghuz. By about 690 some Toghuz-Oghuz tribes remained in Mongolia under Türk authority, while others submitted to the Tang. Relations could be turbulent. Tongra and Pugu tribes of the Toghuz-Oghuz, living in Hexi in 685, revolted against Tang authority and then were reconquered (ZZTJ 203:6435). Later, during Empress Wu's reign (690–705), Tongra and Baixi, discontented with Türk authority, migrated from Mongolia to submit to the Tang in Hedong. At the same time, the Uighur, Qibi, Sijie, and Hun tribes fled southwestward from Mongolia to

Hexi. A hereditary leader of each tribe was appointed as a commander-in-chief of a bridle district.<sup>18</sup>

While the Uighur presence in Hexi only lasted until 727 (chapter 9), the case of the Hun demonstrates that bridle ties to the Tang could endure much longer. The progenitor, Grand Eltäbär Hun Atanzhi, had been appointed a Tang bridle official over Gaolanzhou in Mongolia in the middle of the seventh century. After the tribe migrated to Hexi, the lineal descendants of Hun Atanzhi inherited the title of commander-in-chief from generation to generation, and most likely presided over the East Gaolanzhou bridle prefecture on the outskirts of Lingzhou, Guannei. Hun Atanzhi's great-grandson, Hun Shizhi (716–764), served as both commander-in-chief of Gaolanzhou and a high-ranking officer in the Shuofang Army. Hun Shizhi died in 764, fighting the Tibetans who had attacked Guannei. His son, Hun Jian (736–799), was highly educated in Chinese classics, but also began following his father into battle at age eleven (chapter 4; JTS 134:3703–11; XTS 155:4891–5). The Hun elite of Gaolanzhou is an example of Turko-Mongol military aristocrats who demonstrated strong allegiance to the Tang. Their story was preserved in the historical record only because Hun Jian became a famous loyalist general during the An Lushan rebellion.

## 2. *Chuyue/Shatuo*

Like some elements of the Toghuz-Oghuz, the Chuyue and their leading tribe, the Shatuo, had a stable, long-term relationship with the Tang. They were a relatively small tribal group who originally were subjects of the Western Türks. According to the only known population estimate, the Shatuo had six thousand households in the vicinity of Tingzhou in 789 (see Maps 1.4 and 2.1; ZZTJ 233:7520). Jinman Bridle Prefecture was established for the Chuyue on the southern edge of the Jungarian Basin, east of Tingzhou, after the Tang conquest of the Western Türks in 657 (Skaff 1998b, 118–9, n. 76). More than ten men with the Shatuo surname served successively as Jinman commanders-in-chief. The only detailed information about Tang-Chuyue relations concerns dramatic events in the early eighth century when Shatuo Fuguo was serving as tribal leader and Jinman Commander-in-Chief. When Türk or Tibetan pressure forced him from power in 712, Fuguo and his close followers fled to Tingzhou for protection. He also dispatched an envoy to the Tang court, probably seeking assistance (XTS 218:6154; ZZTJ 210:6678; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 98–9).<sup>19</sup> The Türks laid siege to Tingzhou in late 713 and early 714. Confirmation that the Türks had taken control of the Chuyue comes from a fragmentary document from Xizhou mentioning that “signal beacons all are bright with the news that the Chuyue plundered [gap in text]” (Neiraku 20(3), 7(2) in NTWS 80–1; Hibino 1963, 269, 300–1). After the Türk siege at Tingzhou was broken in 714, the Tang was able to reassert control over the Chuyue by restoring their client, Shatuo Fuguo, to his position as commander-in-chief. At about this



time the Tang court probably bestowed a bride upon him (chapter 7). When Fuguo died, his son, Guduozi, inherited the post of commander-in-chief (JTS 8:172, 103:3187–8, 194a:5172; XTS 133:4543, 215a:6047–8; WYYH 401:5a-b; Dobrovits 2005, 183).

Xuanzong valued the Shatuo and other borderland tribes as imperial subjects, which is clear from another incident that occurred in 734. The Beiting Protector-General, Liu Huan, had “mistreated” the Shatuo, causing them to attack a Tang garrison north of Yizhou (Hami). An imperial edict ordered the garrison head to placate, and not coerce, the Shatuo. Xuanzong predicted that the tribe would soon return to Tingzhou because of Liu Huan’s recent execution—to be discussed in chapter 9—and the plentiful grass and water in the area (QJJ 8:3a-b; QTW 284:10a-b; JTS 8:203). The emperor’s comments indicate that he realized that their vendetta was against Liu Huan rather than the Tang House. In a separate edict of the same month, Xuanzong praised the officers, soldiers, tribes (*buluo*), and commoners of Tingzhou for not following Liu Huan (QJJ 5a-b; QTW 284:12a-b). The emperor’s rhetoric recognized Turko-Mongol tribes as an integral constituency of the empire alongside his troops and common subjects.

One of the most powerful incentives for Turko-Mongol leaders to maintain bridle relations with the Tang may have been the enforcement of inheritance rights of sons. The Hun, Uighur, and Shatuo bridle rulers discussed above mainly appear to have been succeeded by their sons, sometimes with the intervention of Tang forces. Stability of inheritance might have been a welcome change compared to the fratricidal succession conflicts of Turko-Mongol politics. Moreover, the guaranteed inheritance of bridle chiefs was an entitlement superior to the hereditary privilege of Tang officials, which only granted *eligibility* for positions at *lower* ranks to one son and one grandson. Given the chronic oversupply of men eligible for office, most never would have obtained a position (chapter 3). Despite the bureaucratic veneer of positions awarded to Tang bridle tribe leaders, they essentially were a privileged military aristocracy, giving them a strong incentive to remain loyal to the Tang.

### III. Formalization of Diplomatic Relations

Medieval Eurasian diplomatic agreements rarely approached the status of a modern international treaty with formally ratified documents. The few known cases involved great powers with well-developed textual traditions, including treaties between the Tang and Tibet. Extant information on agreements among Turko-Mongols and other peoples is sketchy, but sufficient enough to demonstrate the existence of widely recognized means of formalizing and guaranteeing bilateral pacts—including investiture and oath rituals, and hostage taking. Most agreements, whether written or not, were highly personal and frequently violated.



### A. Oaths, Covenants, and Pacts

Oaths were a common way in Eurasia for clients to pledge allegiance to patrons or seal other types of covenants. Best known are medieval Germanic vassals who upon commendation would recite, “I am a faithful man, just as a man rightfully ought to be towards his lord” (Althoff 2004, 105). Tibetan clan chiefs also commonly swore oaths of loyalty to their kings. One extant example stipulated that vassals be brave and loyal, obey orders, and never conspire against the king (Beckwith 1984, 34, n. 23; Pan 1992b, 150). Evidence of oaths among Turko-Mongols is more sporadic. The Turkic term for making a verbal pledge literally means, “to drink an oath.” The Uighur blood oath involved cutting flesh above the heart to show sincerity, allowing blood to flow into a vessel, recitation of the oath, and the drinking of the blood to sanctify the pledge. Earlier in history, the Scythians and Xiongnu drank mixtures of alcohol and horse or human blood (Drompp 1988, 9–10, n. 22; 2005b, 110–1; Golden 1998, 192). Türks did not necessarily appear to have carried out drinking rituals when they interacted with settled people to the west. For example, the Türk embassy to Byzantium of 568 convinced the emperor Justin to agree to “peace and an offensive and defensive alliance” when the Türk and Sogdian envoys raised their hands and swore an oath that they were being truthful (Blockley 1985, 117). A drinking ritual also is not mentioned a century and half later, when Sogdian nobles swore fidelity to Sulu of the Türgish, as mentioned previously. This sort of verbal pledge seems to have been widely recognized in cross-cultural situations.

During the Sui-Tang Empires covenants (*meng*) are mentioned sporadically in the sources. Although some Confucians argued that sworn covenants should be avoided in diplomacy because they were barbaric (Pan 1992b, 150), there was a countervailing current of the Chinese tradition that sanctioned them. During the Spring and Autumn period aristocrats formed sworn covenants (*mengshi*) between states or individuals by smearing lips with the blood. The blood came from a sacrifice that was believed to summon spirits who witnessed the reading of the covenant. One copy of covenant text was buried and another was placed in a special archive. By the fifth century BCE a covenant master (*mengzhu*), to whom other elites pledged loyalty, guaranteed the agreements (Hansen 1995, 7; Lewis 1990, 18–9). In Sui-Tang times, ancient methods of making sworn covenants were still accepted, but in some cases bloody sacrifices were replaced with incense and candles to invoke Buddha or other gods. In contemporary Chinese usage a covenant referred to a pact with ritualized ratification involving a mutual oath. A pact (*yue*), literally “bonds,” sometimes was used synonymously with covenant, but more frequently only referred to the terms of agreement between two parties. One could violate a pact (*fuyue*), meaning the terms of an agreement, but the covenant rituals and possibility of divine retribution apparently could not be annulled.<sup>20</sup> Some literati Confucians who argued that interstate pacts were possible believed that Chinese covenant rituals were distinct from others in Eastern Eurasia, but recognized that “the [expression of] trust

was the same” no matter the form of ceremonial oath (CFYG 981:1a-b; ZZTJ 191:5992). Covenants were items in the Chinese cultural tool kit that could be deployed as needed in situations, such as civil war or foreign relations, where political networking relied more on personal trust than legal-bureaucratic enforcement.

In the Sui-Tang interior, covenants appeared during times of domestic turmoil when patrimonial networking became the predominant means of creating political order. During the late Sui civil war, the warlord Li Mi offered to seal a covenant with Li Yuan (Tang Gaozu) in 617 to unite their forces against the Sui. Li Yuan declined the offer because Li Mi wanted to take the superior role of covenant master (JTS 53:2220; ZZTJ 184:5742). More than a century later at the start of the An Lushan rebellion Yan Zhenqing, a minor Tang official, became leader of a loyalist resistance force in Hebei. After successfully recapturing parts of Hebei from An Lushan’s troops, Yan became the covenant master of the Tang loyalist militias in his region (XTS 153:4855; ZZTJ 217:6942). Rebel leaders also made covenants. Four commanders of adjacent districts in Hebei formed a protective alliance against the Tang in 782. A Confucian adviser proposed sealing the covenant based on a Warring States model. The four commanders declared themselves kings, but retained the Tang calendar to signify nominal allegiance. One of the four, Zhu Tao, served as the covenant master. Another of the four kings was Wang Wujun, a second generation Khitan originally named Monuogan, who began his career serving in An Lushan’s army as a client of the Qay officer, Li Baochen. Standing on a specially built altar surrounded by their armies, the four kings proclaimed their covenant to Heaven, vowing to attack anyone who did not recognize their alliance (XTS 212:5970; ZZTJ 227:7336). Despite the use of Chinese tradition to as a model for this covenant, the presence of Wang Wujun and the common soldiers, probably of multiple ethnicities, demonstrates that the ceremony had meaning to people from a wide array of backgrounds.

Cross-cultural covenants between individuals, mainly Tang military commanders and foreign elites, apparently were common in borderland encounters. While Taizong was still a prince in the early 620s, he made a personal covenant between himself and Tuli Qaghan of the Türks, promising mutual assistance despite being elite generals of opposing hostile empires. Taizong later claimed that the covenant was sanctified with incense and candles (JTS 194a:5156; XTS 215a:6031; ZZTJ 191:5991–2). When the Tang general Li Jing led a campaign against the Tuyuhun in 635, he recruited a Tangut leader to serve as a guide in exchange for grain and monetary compensation. The two men sealed the agreement with a covenant (ZZTJ 194:6115). During the start of the Türk rebellion in the Ordos in the early 680s, Ashina Funian defeated the Tang general Cao Huaishun, who probably was of Sogdian ancestry. Ashina and Cao made a peace pact (*yuehe*). Cao and surviving Tang troops were given free passage in return for valuables. The two leaders sacrificed an ox to seal their covenant. The purely personal nature of this covenant is demonstrated by the fact that Cao was punished with exile upon his return to the capital

(ZZTJ 202:6401; XTS 215a:6042–3). A Tang regional military commander, Cui Xiyi, made a covenant with the Tibetan general in Koko-nor, Yilishu, in 737 to relax border defenses so their soldiers would be free to engage in agriculture and animal husbandry. They sacrificed a white dog to seal their covenant. However, when Tibet launched an offensive against a Tang vassal far to the west, Xuanzong ordered an attack on Koko-nor in retribution. Cui had to comply with the emperor's order, but he did so with a heavy heart (ZZTJ 214:6827). Finally, the Tang frontier general of Koguryan ancestry, Gao Xianzhi, pretended to make a peace pact with the king of Shāsh in 751. Later Gao attacked Shāsh and looted many valuables (XTS 138:4615; JTS 109:3206; ZZTJ 216:6901).

All these cases demonstrate that peace pacts and covenants with ratification rituals, often involving animal sacrifices, must have been common in various sectors of Eurasia. Given our knowledge of the swearing of Turko-Mongol oaths and Chinese covenants, it seems likely that the blood of animal sacrifices was placed in a container to drink or smear on lips. Covenant makers of various ethnicities shared a common understanding that their personal pacts were useful means of dealing with the exigencies of frontier life. In some cases, their covenants accorded with state interests, such as Li Jing's recruitment of Tangut guides. In other cases, the personal interests of the two parties were paramount, such as Gao Xianzhi's covenant with Shāsh. The illicit and crosscutting nature of these horizontal alliances caught the attention of literati Confucian historians, who preserved the anecdotes to illustrate the "corruption" of frontier life.

## B. Tang Covenants with Equal Powers

Unambiguous evidence of sworn covenants exists in Sui-Tang foreign relations only with the relatively equal powers of Tibet and the Türk empires. The Tang-Tibetan sworn covenants with surviving bilingual texts are the best documented and most studied. A representative case is the sixth treaty of 783 where both sides sought peace in order to shift troops to the interior to quell domestic unrest. The two parties agreed to a bilingual written pact that pledged mutual non-aggression along a carefully demarcated frontier. Three ceremonies were held to ritually ratify the covenant, one on the Hexi frontier and the other two in the respective capital cities. The frontier ceremony was held first. The numbers and standing positions of the two delegations were carefully negotiated to symbolize equality. Each side sent two thousand representatives and seven high officials. In the perceived "Chinese" part of the ceremony the fourteen high officials mounted the north side of a raised altar where the Tang envoys sacrificed a dog and white sheep and the Tibetans a wild ram. The blood of the sacrifices was mixed in a vessel and smeared on the lips, and followed by a recitation of the text of the covenant. Next in accordance with the perceived "Tibetan" custom, which actually demonstrates the growing influence of Buddhist rituals in Tibet, the two leaders of the Tang and Tibetan missions

descended to circumambulate the altar, and entered a tent where they burned incense before a Buddhist image and swore an oath. The ceremony ended when the two leaders ascended the platform again to imbibe alcoholic beverages (JTS 135:3547; Pan 1992b, 137–56; Yoshiro 2000, 92–4). Both parties went to great pains to ratify the pact with solemn ceremonies symbolizing equality.

Several aspects of the Tang-Tibetan covenants are worthy of note. In terms of diplomatic history, these may be the earliest known bilingual treaty texts with formal ratification rituals in Eastern Eurasia, though precursors included covenants between the Di and Eastern Zhou states as early as the seventh century BCE (Di Cosmo 1999a, 948–9). In medieval Western Eurasia, the Byzantines and Sasanians had agreed to a bilingual fifty-year treaty with formal ratification involving an exchange of “sacred letters” in 561 (Blockley 1985, 63–75), almost two millennia after the earliest surviving example.<sup>21</sup> Ritually, the Tang and Tibetan claims to distinctive native ratification rites appear to ignore a greater sharing of ceremonies. Frontier covenants sealed with animal sacrifices or burning incense and candles appeared in agreements involving Tibetan, Türk, and Tang military commanders mentioned above. Moreover, Yoshiro (2000) notes an increasing role of Buddhist rituals in the seven Tang-Tibetan treaties. Mutual interactions and accommodations in the borderland regions encouraged the sharing of ritual practices. Also illuminating is that long-term peace proved to be elusive. Although the purpose of the covenants was to eliminate mutual aggression, both sides on one occasion or another found pretexts to violate each truce. Repeated treaty violations also bedeviled Byzantine-Sasanian relations.

Like the better-known treaties, covenants between the Türks and Tang proved to be fragile. Tang-Türk pacts are less well-documented than Tang-Tibet pacts, presumably because the Tang made numerous concessions, considered embarrassing, at a time when their greatest strategic imperative was to consolidate power internally. If there were texts, they have been lost or intentionally suppressed. Only the pact of 617, prior to the official founding of the dynasty, preserves the basic terms of an agreement. The Tang founder, Li Yuan, sent an envoy to Shibi Qaghan. They sealed a pact (*yue*) in which the Türks agreed to supply two thousand cavalymen and one thousand horses to assist in the conquest of the Sui capital, Chang’an, where the Tang would take control of the population and territory. In return, the Türks would receive all wealth and valuables of the capital (JTS 53:2292; ZZTJ 184:5742). The agreement apparently involved marriage relations because different sources report that Li Yuan sent a daughter or dancing girl to Shibi around the same time (chapter 7, note 6). Further information about the pact is lacking until October 622, when Illig Qaghan launched a massive attack on Hedong. A Tang envoy accused the qaghan of violating their “previous pact.” The envoy proposed a new deal that would renew marriage relations and provide Illig with valuables for his personal treasury. Illig was pleased with the offer and signaled his agreement by withdrawing his forces (ZZTJ 190:5954–5). However, there is no record of a bride sent to Illig (chapter 7, note 7).

Beginning two years later in fall 624, Li Shimin, the future Taizong, became intertwined in the making of pacts with Illig Qaghan. When a Tang army counterattacked against a Türk incursion deep into Guannei only one hundred kilometers northwest of Chang'an, Li Shimin separated from the main force and rode with one hundred horsemen to personally confront Illig. Shimin claimed to Illig—in a quotation that has two surviving redactions—that the two sides had either marriage relations (ZZTJ 191:5992–3) or an oath (*shi*) of mutual non-aggression (JTS 194a:5156; CFYG 19:16a). Both accounts agree that Shimin said, “Why are you breaking the pact (*beiyue*) by coming deep into Our territory?” The next day Illig Qaghan sent Tuli Qaghan to Shimin to ambiguously propose marriage relations. Shimin “approved” though he lacked authority to make a state-level agreement. The sources do not explain how this marriage proposal was related to the previous ones. At this time, Tuli and Shimin renewed their private covenant of blood brotherhood. Once more, information is lacking until two years later in 626, when Illig’s deepest incursion ever brought his Türk armies to the north bank of the Wei River near Chang’an. Illig probably was hoping to take advantage of political turmoil in the capital, where Taizong recently had usurped rule. The familiar pattern was repeated as Taizong rode with six other horsemen to the Bian Bridge to personally accuse Illig Qaghan of shamelessly breaking their covenant, which allegedly involved marriage relations and Tang payments of large quantities of gold and silk. On this occasion Taizong and Illig sealed another covenant on the bridge by sacrificing a white horse (JTS 194a:5157–8; XTS 215a:6033; ZZTJ 191:6019–20). Presumably the ceremony included a blood oath. The terms of the agreement are unknown, but Taizong must have been forced to pay a high indemnity because he later referred to the incident as the “Shame of the Wei River” (Li 1965, 259–66). Despite the humiliating concessions, this covenant was the most successful from the Tang perspective because the Türks only carried out three raids over next four years, a small number compared to the sixty-three attacks from 620 to 626 (appendix A). The relative peace probably was due less to the covenant than improved Tang frontier defenses from 627 onward and Illig Qaghan’s perhaps related problems with domestic political turmoil (chapter 1; Graff 2002b; Wu 1998, 163–8).

In order to conquer the Türks in early 630, Taizong had to take a turn at breaking his word. Earlier, the Tang court had begun to debate whether to honor the newly sealed covenant or exploit the opportunity to strike at the Türks. In September 627, Taizong followed the advice of Zhangsun Wuji, who argued against an attack on the Türks because raising an army would burden the populace at a time when Illig was adhering to the covenant (JTS 194a:5159; XTS 215a:6034; ZZTJ 192:6037; Graff 2002b, 45). By May 628, Minister of War, Du Ruhui, urged a duplicitous change in policy when he said, “Northern barbarians (*rongdi*) are dishonest, and eventually violate pacts (*yue*). Now if we do not exploit their disorder, later we will regret it. Exploiting disorder to land a fatal blow is the way of the ancients.” Heeding Du’s advice, Taizong began to prepare for war (ZZTJ 192:6049–50; Graff 2002b, 46).

Before dispatching his forces late in 629, Taizong issued a *casus belli* claiming that Illig's assistance to the warlord, Liang Shidu, sixteen months earlier had abrogated their covenant (JTS 68:2507; ZZTJ 193:6065). According to David Graff (2002b, 48–9), this “rings rather hollow” and most likely “Taizong’s timing was governed by considerations of military expediency.” After Illig was captured, he was taken to the capital, presented to the Tang Ancestral Temple, and then brought to Taizong for judgment. Taizong enumerated Illig’s crimes, mainly related to the heavy raiding up to 626. The emperor disingenuously spared Illig’s life on the basis that he had avoided striking deeply into Tang territory after the covenant at Bian Bridge (JTS 194a:5160; XTS 215a:6035–6; ZZTJ 193:6074–5).

The Tang-Türk covenants illustrate that both sides treated the pacts as expedients to obtain short-term strategic aims. This pattern also is visible in the early eighth century when Qapaghan Qaghan broke a covenant with Xuanzong by raiding two prefectures on the northwestern frontier (TDZL 130:15a–18a). The Tang-Türk covenants seem to resemble the Tang-Tibetan treaties where, Pan Yihong (1992b, 148–9) observes, the more powerful side was prone to violate the pact. Parties involved in negotiations often made sanctimonious statements about their own honesty or dishonesty of rivals. A qaghan of the Western Türks once claimed to a Byzantine ambassador, “You envoys come to me dressed in lies, and [Emperor Tiberius] who has sent you deceives me equally. . . To lie is foreign and alien to a Türk” (Blockley 1985, 175; Golden 1992, 130). Likewise, the Tang Minister of War, Du Ruhui, considered “northern barbarians” to be untrustworthy, and Xuanzong in correspondence to the Khitan in 734 dissembled, “We in Our dealings with all of the foreigners have never violated a pact (*fuyue*)” (QTW 285:1b–2a; QJJ 8:11b; Herbert 1978, 74–5, 82). Such rhetorical legerdemain was not to be trusted. Deception was the norm, not the exception, in Eurasian diplomacy.

### C. Sui-Tang Pacts with Outer Clients

Hostage taking was a common Eurasian method of signaling and guaranteeing the fidelity of outer clients. Elite hostages, especially sons or younger brothers of rulers, were dispatched to the court of the patron. Hostage taking of boys was practiced in the Han and Roman empires, but had even more ancient roots (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 1:258–9; Di Cosmo 2002a, 198; Yang 1952, 509–14).<sup>22</sup> It also appeared in medieval times among Turko-Mongol peoples.<sup>23</sup> In the sixth century a Byzantine general tentatively negotiated a pact under which the Avars would provide sons of the tribal elite as hostages in exchange for permission to reside on Byzantine territory, essentially as outer clients. The Byzantine emperor, Justin, blocked the deal because he insisted on hostages who were sons of the Avar qaghan (Blockley 1985, 149). This scattered evidence suggests that hostage taking was common in Eurasia from ancient times. The patron’s desire for control over the kin of his clients is another indication that interstate pacts were viewed as personal agreements between rulers.



The prevalence of hostage taking in Sui-Tang relations with Turko-Mongols is difficult to assess because relatively few foreign diplomats who remained in Chang'an are specifically labeled as hostages. Of known cases, hostages most commonly were sons and brothers of monarch. If a hostage's polity rebelled against Sui or Tang authority, the detained boy or man normally was not killed, but was retained to serve as a potential puppet ruler (Zhang 1986, 101). For example, after the Tang conquest of the Tuyuhun in 635, Taizong installed Murong Shun to succeed his father as qaghan because Shun had served as a hostage-page at the Sui and Tang courts. On the other hand, former hostages were not necessarily subservient to the Sui or Tang. Two hostage-pages of the late seventh century, Sun Wanrong of the Khitan and Ashide Yuanzhen of the Türks, became involved in resistance against the Tang. The anti-Tang stance of these two former hostages became cause célèbre to literati Confucians who argued against hosting hostages at court (chapter 4). Despite conservative opposition, the practice continued in the eighth century. In fact, most known cases of hostages living in the capital date to Xuanzong's reign. For example, the Qay and Khitan both sent hostages to Chang'an in the late 720s (CFYG 975:7a-b; Zhang 1986, 97-102).

Hostages served as a barometer of the level of trust between patron and client. Tang Gaozu allowed the hostage Murong Shun to return home in exchange for a Tuyuhun attack on a rival Hexi warlord in 619. This proved to be a mistake, however, because Tuyuhun attacks on the Tang became particularly intense in the 620s (appendix A; JTS 198:5298; XTS 221a:6224; Molè 1970, 49, nn. 392-4). Records of diplomatic visits during Xuanzong's reign sometimes cryptically note whether diplomatic envoys "returned to foreign lands" or "remained in the imperial guard corps" (CFYG 975:1a-24a). Those who stayed in the bodyguard may have functionally served as hostages. For example, in 734 at a time of rising suspicion between Xuanzong and his outer client, Sulu of the Türgish, the latter dispatched the "great chief" Hejieda to the Tang court to discuss the reasons for the dispute between the two sides. Xuanzong appointed him to a military position and bestowed a red caftan and silver belt appropriate for a Tang official. Hejieda "remained in the imperial guard corps," perhaps as surety that the Türgish would not attack the Tang (CFYG 975:15b; QJJ 11:6a; QTW 286:10b; WYYH 471:10a). Another example hints that bodyguards at the capital were akin to hostages. During a time of improving relations between the Tang and Parhae, Xuanzong granted the request of the king for the return of hostages, referred to as "substitutes" (*tiren*), and men serving in the Tang imperial bodyguard (QTW 285:11b-12b; QJJ 9:11b-12b; Herbert 1978, 73, 79-81). The many men of ambiguous status in the capital bodyguard suggest that hostage taking may have been more prevalent than the Sui-Tang historical sources indicate.

Faalty oaths apparently did not have an important role in Sui-Tang relations with outer clients, but at least one case of an allegiance ritual exists. When Qimin Qaghan and his Türk followers rendered fealty to Sui Yangdi in 607, they slashed



their bared chests (chapter 5). This probably is related to the Uighur customary oath that involved cutting the chest above the heart to demonstrate sincerity. During the same ceremony, when Qimin Qaghan toasted Yangdi, the cup and its contents, whether blood, an alcoholic beverage or a combination of the two, may have represented the drinking aspect of Turko-Mongol oath rituals. This rare example also suggests how Türks may have rendered a fidelity oath to a qaghan.

Sui-Tang appointment and investiture of outer clients involved pacts (*yue*) that in a few cases have been preserved in extant diplomatic correspondence. These agreements apparently lacked ratification rituals, so the Confucian record keepers did not classify them as sworn covenants. One involves Sui Wendi and Ishbara Qaghan of the Türks, in 585. Their pact came after a year of warming relations in which Ishbara was able to regain control of Mongolia with Sui assistance. Ishbara's letter took the form of a memorial in which he retained his Turkic title of Illig Kül Shad Bagha Ishbara Qaghan, but acknowledged himself as a Sui official (*chen*) (chapter 4). The Gobi Desert was to serve as the boundary between the two parties. Ishbara offered to guard the frontiers, send a hostage-page to the Sui court, and proffer annual tribute of fine horses. On the other hand, he requested retaining traditional Turkic dress, hairstyle, language, law, and customs. Wendi's edict accepted these terms, saying "although We formerly were at peace, We remained separate states. Now as monarch and official, We have become a unified body." Wendi's edict also mentioned that there essentially would be a one-side ritual ratification of the pact with an announcement at the Sui ancestral temple (SS 84:1869–70; ZZTJ 176:5483; Pan 1997, 103–4). The patron, Wendi, would not interfere with Ishbara's domestic affairs (law, customs, etc.), but the two would cooperate militarily. A hostage and annual tribute would symbolize Ishbara's inferior position. Ishbara was forced to make these concessions because of his strategic weakness vis-à-vis the Western Türks. The content of the agreement also provides important evidence of the customary expectations of *formal* patron-outer client bonds in Eastern Eurasia. Many elements of Western European feudalism are visible, but the lack of a fief or benefice is a noticeable difference.

Another pact from the early Tang is particularly interesting because it depicts Taizong in his role as Heavenly Qaghan exercising the customary prerogatives of Turko-Mongol chieftains. The pact was necessitated when Taizong conferred the title of qaghan on Ashina Simo in 639, reversing a post-conquest decision to invest Türk elites only with lesser noble ranks. The Türks were ordered to move from the Ordos to their former territory north of the Yellow River in Inner Mongolia. This new state of affairs potentially created conflicts between the Türks and Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo, who had received Tang investiture as ruler of Mongolia in 628. Taizong issued a letter under the imperial seal (*xishu*) to Zhenzhu Bilgä delineating the terms of the pact. The Sir-Yantuo qaghan would be considered senior and Türk qaghan junior because of Zhenzhu Bilgä's earlier investiture. Territorially, the Gobi Desert would divide their domains with the Sir-Yantuo to the north in

Mongolia and Türks to the south in Inner Mongolia. In the case of conflict, Taizong promised to raise an army to punish the offender. The terms of the pact (*yue*) were incumbent upon the qaghans and their descendants. The Tang sources imply that Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan's receipt of the letter signaled his approval, but his reluctance to abide by the new arrangement was evident from his bitter complaints about the duplicity of the Türks (JTS 194a:5163–4, 199b:5344; QTW 10:118; XTS 215a:6039; ZZTJ 193:6148–9, 197:6215). Taizong varied his justifications for making the pact depending on the audience being addressed, as mentioned in chapter 2. In the letter to Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan, Taizong depicted himself as a benevolent ruler concerned that the Türks required new territory because their population and flocks had increased so abundantly. According to the *Old Tang history*, Taizong's true motive was to limit Zhenzhu Bilgä's power by using the Türks to encroach on his territory (JTS 199b:5344).

Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan's subsequent actions reveal that his acceptance of the pact was meant to buy time. The qaghan, who was from the lower elite, considered the royal Ashina a threat to his legitimacy and feared that his tribes might switch allegiance to the Türks (JTS 194a:5164; 119b:5346; XTS 215a:6040; ZZTJ 197:6215–6). Sir-Yantuo forces attacked the Türks in late 641, but a combined Tang-Türk army repulsed them. Taizong reiterated the terms of the agreement to a Sir-Yantuo envoy in January 642, "We created a pact (*yue*) between you and the Türks. The Great [Gobi] Desert serves as the border. We will attack the one acting as an aggressor against the other" (ZZTJ 196:6172). Taizong conciliated Zhenzhu Bilgä later in the year by offering to negotiate marriage relations (chapter 7), but after the deliberations broke down, Zhenzhu Bilgä dispatched another incursion in late 644. Although his troops were forced to retreat in the face of a Tang counterattack, Sir-Yantuo harassment of the Türks had the desired effect. The Türks revolted against Ashina Simo and returned with their families and flocks to less vulnerable territory in the Ordos region south of the Yellow River (JTS 194a:5164; 199b:5346; XTS 215a:6040; ZZTJ 197:6215–6). Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan died in 645 before he had much time to enjoy the fruits of his victory over the Türks that effectively abrogated Taizong's pact.

In making this particular pact, Taizong used his prerogative as Heavenly Qaghan to attempt to curb the power of an outer client. Exercising the customary rights of a pastoral nomadic chieftain, he allocated grazing privileges and adjudicated conflicts among subordinate tribes (Barfield 1993, 111–3; Smith 1978, 63). The pact was issued more than a decade after Taizong had invested Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan as ruler, effectively revising the original terms of their relationship. Although the pact apparently was not negotiated and lacked ritual ratification, the terms were clearly delineated in writing. True negotiations occurred in the aftermath of the pact. Zhenzhu Bilgä chose to test Taizong's resolve and ability to fight by dispatching troops on two occasions to attack the Türks. Taizong made concessions by placating Zhenzhu Bilgä with marriage negotiations. Diplomatic posturing and military jousting continued until Zhenzhu Bilgä's death.

## Conclusion

Medieval Eurasian diplomacy was characterized by widely shared understandings of the form and function of interstate relations. Paralleling patrimonial politics, diplomacy was highly personalistic and did not involve perpetual treaties between corporate polities. Negotiations normally were bilateral. Agreements between relatively equal states were less common than those involving the formation of patron-client bonds. All parties shared the culturally imprinted assumption that negotiated diplomatic relationships should take the form of a hierarchical dyad with the superior party giving titles to the inferior who offered submission. These vertical bonds normally were ritually ratified via bestowal of investiture regalia, but some cases are known to have involved oaths or written documents. Outer clients guaranteed allegiance with hostages and signaled continued willingness to engage in relationships by proffering tribute. These patterns of diplomacy are visible as far west as the Byzantine and Sasanian empires.

The conferred titles were carefully calibrated and recalibrated to reflect the balance of power and level of trust between patron and outer client. Despite a patron's image of superiority, which the Sui and Tang courts feverishly cultivated, bonds with outer clients were negotiated mutually. All parties covertly practiced deceit and duplicity while publicly proclaiming their own virtue and demanding sincerity of negotiating partners. The intrigue and manipulation was familiar to all involved. Although titles derived from particular cultural milieus, they might overlap in a form of mutual accommodation and simultaneity. The propensity of rulers to hold simultaneous indigenous and externally granted titles, such as king/*eltäbär*, provides further examples of the syncretic tendency of Eastern Eurasian diplomacy that was noted previously in chapter 4.

The hard bargaining over the form of investiture was directly related to the substance of strategic interests. During periods when two parties failed to reach a reciprocally acceptable arrangement, negotiations might shift to jousting on the battlefield that might lead to further exchanges of envoys. Likewise, peaceful relations would persist only as long as the interests of both sides were in accord. Even though diplomatic talks only involved two states, both parties generally operated in the context of dynamic multilateral struggles for power. Investiture or appointment implied mutual non-aggression or cooperation in an alliance, allowing both parties to confront their enemies individually or in unison. Patrons sought outer clients to serve as buffers or provide military assistance against more distant threats. Clients might seek investiture for protection or to free troops to attack another enemy.

Although considerations of grand strategy are to be expected, domestic political concerns probably were even more intertwined with foreign affairs than in the modern world of nation states because of the personal nature of patrimonial politics. The larger powers tried to create splits in the ruling elite of smaller polities by

imposing puppet rulers from outside or supporting one internal rival against another. Turko-Mongol tribes or tribal unions were especially susceptible to outside manipulation because of the lack of clear lines of succession to the throne. Reigning qaghans normally had to be wary of rivals with substantial domestic support, but these challengers posed an even greater threat when bolstered by investiture and assistance from an external power. This explains the eagerness of seemingly independent Turko-Mongol rulers to receive outside investiture.

The politics of personality also featured prominently in the decisions of tribal leaders to migrate to the China-Inner Asia borderlands to become Tang bridle officials. Despite the bureaucratic veneer created when indigenous elites were appointed as “prefects” or “commanders-in-chief,” the political dynamics were in keeping with Turko-Mongol patrimonial traditions. Chiefs leading their adherents to the Tang frontier often were the losers in factional conflicts or fleeing political turmoil on the steppe. Their successful incorporation into the Tang Empire hinged partially on personal interactions with Tang officials of the borderlands. Tang frontier commanders and pastoral nomadic elites could overcome mutual suspicions because the submission of tribal groups, like raiding, was a fairly regular occurrence, and many Tang elites from North China favored cosmopolitan networking strategies.

## Negotiating Kinship

Eurasian patrimonial politics, which took the household as a model, encouraged the formation of two major types of kinship bonds in domestic and foreign affairs. One, marriage, was recognized as a means of creating political alliances horizontally between elite households, and vertically between patrons and clients. The other was fictive kinship based on genealogical manipulation, fosterage, adoption, or surname bestowal. In domestic politics, the various kinship ties enhanced the reputations of rulers as patriarchs, while clients accrued status via tighter bonds with their elite patrons. In the realm of diplomacy, rulers carefully negotiated marital ties, but talks failed as often as they succeeded because of the conflicting strategic, political, and economic considerations involved. All forms of kinship ties supplemented patrimonial efforts to build political families in the domestic and foreign spheres, but Eastern Eurasian rulers treated family bonds as a symbol of special favor or stronger mutual commitment, not as a routine aspect of patron-client relations. Consequently, marriage and fictive kinship generally played a secondary role in diplomacy to investiture and appointment.

### I. Political Marriages

Marriage alliances are one of the most studied aspects of Eastern Eurasian diplomacy during the Sui, Tang, and other periods in imperial Chinese history. Patterns of interstate nuptial ties varied from dynasty to dynasty. In addition to the Sui and Tang, the Western Han, Yuan, Qing, and various northern dynasties and warlords engaged in marital diplomacy, but the Eastern Han, Jin, Song, Ming, and various southern dynasties did not (Holmgren 1990–1, 35–6; Pan 1997a, 96, n. 4). Modern scholars have differed in their explanations of the patterns of marital relationships. Holmgren (1990–1, 35, 46–9) argues that interstate marriages generally occurred when there were militarily weak Chinese dynasties and strong foreign powers. Other scholars, taking a “material” position, see marriage alliances as a response to

initiatives from Inner Asian rulers who were attracted to the substantial dowries and gifts of China-based dynasties (Barfield 1989, 148; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 141). Pan Yihong (1997a, 122–6) takes a “strategic culture” stance to argue that some Chinese dynasties were predisposed to accommodating Inner Asian norms of creating alliances. This chapter generally supports Pan’s position. Culturally, only Chinese dynasties with origins in North China, Manchuria, or Mongolia engaged in diplomatic marriages with other Eurasian rulers. Politically and strategically, successful matches resulted when agreements met the needs of both parties. Economic considerations were involved, but influenced the outcome of negotiations to a lesser extent.

Most previous studies of marriage diplomacy have treated it in isolation from the full range of issues involved in interstate negotiations. This chapter takes a holistic approach. Marriage negotiations were carried out parallel to discussions over other issues such as investiture and trade. Sui-Tang strategic culture overrode literati Confucians who objected to sending a woman away from “civilization” to live among “barbaric” peoples. Sui and Tang rulers ignored these taboos because they were inclined to expand the political family in order to achieve strategic objectives.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Turko-Mongol Political Marriages

Marriage alliances were a typical aspect of pastoral nomadic politics and diplomacy that derived from indigenous kinship patterns. Turko-Mongol elites were polygynous, which gave them a great deal of flexibility in cementing political relationships through marriage. Throughout history, tribal leaders could take multiple wives who in turn would produce large numbers of progeny, including daughters to be married off to allies and subordinates. The ruler’s harem could be expanded as necessary to accept brides from new allies (Holmgren 1991, 77; Lindholm 1986, 336–43). In the medieval period qaghans generally engaged in two types of marriages, both of which had political purposes. One was an *exchange* of brides with other elite lineages belonging to the inner tribes or relatively equal external powers, and the other was the *bestowal* of brides on favored outer clients. The marriages might reinforce existing political ties or signal new strategic relationships. Aside from purely political concerns, the social status of a prospective mate also seems to have weighed heavily into considerations of a match.

Exchanges of brides between leaders of inner tribes are attested among medieval Turko-Mongols. For instance, the two most powerful lineages of the Khitan appear to have exchanged wives with each other (JTS 199b:5350; XTS 219:6168; ZZTJ 205:6505–7).<sup>2</sup> In another case, Bilgä Qaghan’s *qatun* or primary wife, Pofu, was the daughter of the elder statesman Tonyuquq. After Qapaghan Qaghan’s death and a short civil war, Pofu may have played a role in convincing Bilgä Qaghan to spare her father, Tonyuquq, who had supported a rival. Later, Pofu was present with her husband and father at a drinking party entertaining a Tang ambassador in 725, which

included important negotiations over Bilgä's request to take a Tang princess as bride. After Bilgä Qaghan's death, she acted as regent for their young son from 734 to 741, in an unstable political environment (JTS 194a:5174–6; XTS 215b:6051–6; ZZTJ 212:6764–5, 6809). Pofu's life provides evidence that elite wives could exercise considerable power. The brief account of Pofu's life was unusual in that it was preserved in the Sui-Tang historical records. She received notice because of her prominent father and husband, and political influence, but we can suppose that many other similar marriages occurred among contemporary inner tribes.

Aside from bride exchanges, Turko-Mongol rulers also engaged in marriage relationships with outer clients or rivals qaghans. For example, the Türk Bilgä Qaghan's daughter was married to the Türgish qaghan, Sulu, while Sulu's daughter was married to Bilgä's son (Tekin 1968, 280; JTS 194b:5192; XTS 215b:6067; ZZTJ 214:6833; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 46, 82–3). The arrangement apparently acknowledged that the khanates were nearly equal in power, but Bilgä Qaghan had seniority as Sulu's father-in-law. In another case, Türk qaghans bestowed daughters and sisters on their Kirghiz outer clients (XTS 217b:6149). In an example involving the Western Türks, Ashina Helu favored the chiefs of one subordinate On Oq tribe with marriages to his daughters (XTS 215b:6061, n. 5). Political marriages between the Turkic elites and sedentary client-rulers are even better attested. The Western Türks bestowed brides upon kings of the oasis-states of Gaochang, Samarqand, Karashahr, and Kashgar during the late sixth and early seventh centuries (Skaff 2002, 367, n. 38). Lower levels of the tribal elite might be involved in this type of match. For example, the "important official" of the Western Türks, Quli Chor arranged a marriage between his younger brother and the daughter of the king of Karashahr in 640 (JTS 198:5302; XTS 221b:6229; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 112).

Negotiations over marriage ties involved considerations of strategy and status. The example of Bumïn, founder of the First Türk Empire, is illuminating. The Türks originally were an outer tribe of the Rouran. The Türk leader, Bumïn, assisted the Rouran qaghan, A'nagui (r. 520–52) by attacking and incorporating the rebellious Tiele tribal union in 546. Thereafter, Bumïn requested a match with one of the qaghan's daughters based on his rising prestige as a valued client. The Rouran leader was incensed and sent an envoy with the insulting message, "You are my blacksmith slave. How dare you speak in this way?" (ZS 50:908–9; Drompp 2005a, 103–4). Bumïn, furious that the qaghan was treating him as a low-status outer client, killed the emissary, and broke relations with the Rouran. Since A'nagui already had a marriage alliance with the Eastern Wei Dynasty of northeastern China, Bumïn naturally requested a marital relationship with the Western Wei of northwestern China. The alliance was sealed when the Western Wei court sent Bumïn a princess in 551. Bumïn had succeeded in securing his southern flank and also bolstering his prestige with a high-status bride. In the following year, Bumïn capitalized on these diplomatic successes to overthrow the Rouran and establish the Türks as rulers of Mongolia (ZS 50:908–9; Pan 1997a, 107–8). These events reveal much about the



protocol and purpose of Inner Asian marriage alliances. Diplomatic custom required the inferior party to request marital ties, while the patron determined whether or not to bestow a bride. The Rouran qaghan's criterion for sealing a betrothal was social status, but Bumīn believed his military power and sizeable following should have been the paramount considerations. A'naġui's refusal of the marriage was a cause of resentment and a *casus belli* for war. The subsequent marriage between the Türks and Western Wei signaled mutual non-aggression. Contemporary rulers in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and North China had a common understanding of the diplomatic signals of these marriages.

A'naġui's rejection of Bumīn was not unusual in status-conscious Turko-Mongol society. "Trophy wives" from eminent lineages could bolster the prestige and charisma of a husband and their offspring. For example, at the Türk *quriltai* to choose a new qaghan after the death of Taspar in 581, the backgrounds of the candidates' mothers became a decisive factor. The tribal leaders favored Anluo, son of Taspar and a wife of noble lineage, over Daluobian, son of Muqan and a wife of a humble background (chapter 3). Similar considerations seem to have been at work at lower levels of the tribal elite. In the Turkic funerary inscriptions of the Upper Yenisei Basin in Southern Siberia, women are only mentioned when their marriages add luster to their husbands or natal kin. For example the genealogy of one line of chiefs commends a daughter because she was married to a commander-in-chief (*tutuq*). In another case a "noble Chinese woman" who was the wife of Törü Apa, burnished his reputation (Vasilyev 1991, 123–5). In the rhetoric of the inscriptions, women became worthy of note when they increased the renown of their husbands or natal relatives. The high value of a prestigious wife endowed her with the potential for political influence, as the above case of Pofu exemplifies.

The bestowal of a bride also created political advantages for the patron. Outer clients who received brides were expected to be loyal. A Tangut chief, Tabgach Chici, once explained the mutual obligations that emanated from marriage ties between himself and the Tuyuhun qaghan whom Tang forces had recently killed. Speaking to a Tang official trying to convince the Tangut to submit, Chici said, "I received the favor of kinship from the [Tuyu]hun monarch. Our mutual commitment to bosom companionship does not differ in life or death. How can you think otherwise? You should go quickly, so I do not need to stain my sword!" Tabgach Chici viewed his marital relationship with the Tuyuhun monarch as a special honor that should be recompensed with loyalty continuing beyond death. Nonetheless, Chici eventually proved willing to forsake his former master after his own client chiefs began to defect to the Tang. Realizing the growing tenuousness of his position, Chici also submitted to the Tang authority (JTS 198:5291–2). Tabgach Chici exemplifies the ideal that a client receiving a prestigious bride should demonstrate enduring loyalty to his master, but also that political reality could trump the most high-minded principles. In another case, Bilgä Qaghan invested Bars Beg as qaghan of the Kirghiz and bestowed his younger sister as a bride. After Bars Beg "betrayed"

the Türks, they attacked and killed him (Klyashtornyi 2004, 38; Tekin 1968, 280). Changing strategic calculations probably explain Bars Beg's actions, while his "disloyalty" in turn justified the Türk conquest of the Kirghiz.

Strategic considerations probably lay behind most marriage relationships. Bumïn Qaghan's ties to the Western Wei are mentioned above. In another case, Ishtemi of the Western Türks sent a princess to the Sasanian ruler Khusrau in 557 to seal an alliance against the Hephthalites (Golden 1992, 127). Aside from the short-term requirements of warfare, the nuptial ties of Turko-Mongol patrons also had a potential payoff in the long term, which is better documented during the later Mongol Empire. The Mongol khans would marry sisters and daughters to rulers who had freely surrendered. The sons born of these nuptial ties were affinal kin of the Mongol royal lineage. Sometimes these Mongol women were able to gain regency powers (Holmgren 1990–1, 61–2). Medieval Turkic rulers probably obtained similar benefits from marriage alliances with subordinate clients.

### B. Tang Domestic Marriage Patterns

Some social historians have argued that there was a firm distinction between Han Chinese and Turko-Mongol marriage patterns (Holmgren 1991, 60–1, 77). However, this conclusion is based on the shaky premise that Confucian prescriptions were the norm throughout Chinese history. There is a long Chinese tradition of popular kinship customs violating Confucian strictures (Hinsch 2002, 10–1, 33–46). Moreover, previous research on the Tang imperial house, to be discussed below, has detected anomalous practices often attributed to the partly Särbi heritage of the Li lineage. Distinctive North Chinese marriage conventions, including a willingness to make cross-ethnic matches, probably contributed to a social atmosphere condoning Sui-Tang diplomatic marriages.

Tang imperial marriages, which are better studied than the Sui, demonstrate some striking deviations from Confucian orthodoxy. The Tang imperial family adhered to some rules, but not others. In accordance with Chinese custom, a Tang ruler married a single official wife, the legal mother of all children, and an expansive harem of concubines. On the other hand, the Tang House violated Confucian strictures against matches between cousins of different generations, changes of status from wife to concubine or vice versa, and remarriages of females, including widows to former brothers-in-law or stepsons. The former probably was the most frequently ignored norm. To give one example, Zhongzong was the grandson of Taizong, while his first wife, posthumously known as Empress Zhao, was the daughter of Taizong's sister. In other words, Zhongzong had taken a bride of a senior generation, his father's cousin (JTS 51:2171; Wang 1999, 266–71). Other "scandalous" non-Confucian behavior most famously included Gaozong's marriage to Empress Wu, who was his father's widowed concubine (Guisso 1978, 16–8; Guisso 1979, 247–9). Xuanzong's infamous concubine, Yang Guifei, originally was the wife of

one of his living sons (Levy 1962, 413–8). Until the reign of Daizong (r. 762–79), Tang emperors habitually arranged new matches for widowed and divorced princesses in accordance with contemporary popular practice, and ignored Confucian strictures against widow remarriage.<sup>3</sup> However, after the reign of Suzong only one remarriage is known to have occurred, a sign of growing Confucian influence at the same time that orthodox primogeniture took hold in imperial succession (Wang 1999, 236–65).

When the imperial family engaged in so-called illicit practices, such as cross-generational marriages, they did so unobtrusively, apparently in superficial deference to Confucian orthodoxy. These unorthodox marital customs apparently were integrated into North Chinese culture under Sārbi rule. Among Turko-Mongols, cross-generational matches were allowed and male siblings were expected to practice the levirate by marrying a brother's widows (Chen 1996b, 383; Wang 1999, 271). During the Northern Qi Dynasty elite women had a strong propensity to remarry (Holmgren 1982, 36–8). The early Tang House's relatively freewheeling approach to marriage reflects the northwestern lineages' accepted customs, which probably lowered inhibitions to forging matches with Turko-Mongol elites.

Marital links among Eastern Eurasian polities also were facilitated by shared assumptions about the role and form of political marriages. Chinese elite marriages from late Han through Tang dynasties resembled Turko-Mongol elite marriages, in that allied lineages tended to form clusters that repetitively intermarried (Ebrey 1991a, 11; Holmgren 1991, 60–1). For example, northeastern ethnically Han lineages of the Cui, Lu, Li, and Zhen tended to marry among themselves, and famously refused to send brides to the Tang imperial family, whom they considered parvenus. Although Taizong bitterly complained about their snobbery, his Li house had been intermarrying within a gradually evolving group of allied Han-Sārbi lineages since the founding of the Western Wei Dynasty (Chen 1954; Ebrey 1991b, 100–1; Wang 1999, 251–7, 266–71). In addition to marriage exchanges, Sui-Tang rulers, like their brethren on the steppe, made one-way bestowals of daughters and sisters on favored civil and military officials or their male relatives. Usually the domestic grooms were of Han ethnicity, but some Turkic elites residing at the capital received brides too. In 614, Sui Yangdi married a princess to Chuluo Qaghan (r. 603–11), a former ruler of the Western Türks who had become a Sui general (SS 84:1879). Taizong arranged marriages with four Turkic military commanders.<sup>4</sup> These types of marital ties can be considered displays of patrimonial generosity that brought prestige to the recipient's family. Most elite families—excepting the haughty northeasterners—sought marriage ties to the Tang House to enhance their social and political stature, even though many men stereotyped princesses as spoiled girls who became demanding, domineering, or licentious wives (Wang 1999, 271–8). The high political value of emperors' daughters also is demonstrated by the above-mentioned frequent remarriages in the first half of the dynasty.

The marriage connections of Tang emperors receive the most attention, but interethnic marital ties also ramified within the metropolitan elite and stretched to the imperial borderlands. A case from the 720s reveals the role these marriages could play in creating networks of power and influence. Two high-ranking officials at the Tang court had marital relationships with Toghuz-Oghuz bridle chiefs in Hexi (JTS 103:3191–2, 195:5198; XTS 133:4547–8, 217a:6114; ZZTJ 213:6776–9). One was Li Lingwen, Xuanzong's close confidant who had assisted the emperor in the bloody palace intrigue of 713 (chapter 3). Li Lingwen had a stellar family background, being a scion of an eminent northwestern lineage and grandnephew of the famous Tang general, Li Jing, who led the conquest of the Türks in 630 (JTS 8:169; ZZTJ 210:6683). The political nature of the marriage is revealed by a dispute that arose between the Toghuz-Oghuz and the Tang military commander, Wang Junchuo. When Xuanzong rendered judgment, he demoted Li Lingwen along with four Toghuz-Oghuz chiefs to minor provincial posts in the south (chapter 9). The emperor evidently perceived that all of the men were involved in a political alliance, cemented by marriages, and should share in culpability. Marriages involving the bridle tribe elite and close clients of the emperor, like Li Lingwen, would have created mutual interests allowing the informal exercise of influence between the imperial metropolis and borderlands. More generally, Li Lingwen's marital relationship with the Toghuz-Oghuz demonstrate the openness of eminent northwestern lineages to interethnic kinship connections that can be traced back to the period of Sārbi rule over North China (Holmgren 1982, 1).

### C. Strategic Culture of Diplomatic Marriages

Given the integration of marriage into domestic patrimonial politics, it might seem natural that Eurasian rulers would use it as a tool of diplomacy. The bestowal of a bride could display benevolence and favor in the foreign as well as the domestic sphere. Some Eastern Eurasian monarchs even cultivated images as solicitous matchmakers on the behalf of visiting ambassadors. For example, Taizong tried to arrange a match between an imperial kinswoman and the already married Tibetan envoy Mgar Ston rtsan. Taizong even sought to enshrine his image as a benevolent patriarch by commissioning a painting memorializing the incident, *The Imperial Sedan Chair* (chapter 5, Figure 5.1). Likewise, in 756 the Uighur ruler, Gele Qaghan, adopted his wife's sister and bestowed her on a Tang envoy, Li Chengcai, who was the great-grandson of Gaozong (Mackerras 1973, 55; Pan 1997a, 118–9). These bestowals of brides on envoys displayed patriarchal concern and signaled friendly intent.

Despite the prevalent patrimonialism of imperial China, the patterns of marriage diplomacy varied for more than a millennium prior to the Sui and Tang. As early as the Spring and Autumn period, nuptial relationships began between ethnically Han and alien rulers (Thatcher 1991, 30, 42–3). Later, the Western Han established a

“harmonious kinship” (*heqin*) policy that involved sending princesses and annual gifts to the Xiongnu in return for a promise of peace. Ideological objections became more prominent by 133 BCE when Emperor Wudi ended the marriage relationship with the Xiongnu in favor of aggressive policies in part because “harmonious kinship” had not halted raiding (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 135–59; Di Cosmo 2002a, 206–52; Pan 1997a, 95–102; Yü 1967, 10, n. 3, 36–8). After Wudi’s reign, the Han court reverted to a diplomatic approach toward the Xiongnu, but without engaging in marriage alliances (Yü 1967, 43–51). After the fall of the Han, only dynasties with foreign origins and/or roots in the China-Inner Asian borderlands engaged in marriage diplomacy. The ethnically diverse dynasts in North China during the Sixteen Kingdoms Era (304–439) actively engaged in marriage alliances with each other and Inner Asian powers. This pattern of diplomacy continued under the Northern Wei, which undertook an exchange of brides with the Rouran in 434. When the Eastern Wei/Northern Qi and Western Wei/Northern Zhou were contending for power in North China, they were hostile toward each other and did not intermarry. Instead they competed for support from the Rouran and Türks, giving and accepting brides in approximately equal numbers (Pan 1997a, 103–8, 127–9). The Sui and Tang dynasties, which emerged from the Western Wei/Northern Zhou elite, continued the policy of marriage alliances with Turko-Mongols and other Inner Asian rulers.

### 1. *Sui-Tang Strategic Culture*

Under the Sui and Tang, interstate marriages supplemented bonds of investiture or appointment to symbolize a particularly close relationship, especially with Turko-Mongol rulers. As Tables 7.1 and 7.2 demonstrate, the vast majority (about five-sixths) of successful and failed deliberations over marital ties involved Turko-Mongols, including the Türks, Tuyuhun, Sir-Yantuo, Uighur, Türgish, Qay, Khitan, and Shatuo. Of the exceptions—Tibet, Gaochang, Khotan, and Nanzhao—only Khotan and Nanzhao are not known to have been involved in marriages with Turko-Mongols, and only Nanzhao was not in Inner Asia.<sup>5</sup> All parties bargained as zealously and strategically over marriages as any other diplomatic issue. As a comparison of Tables 7.1<sup>6</sup> and 7.2<sup>7</sup> shows, marriage negotiations only resulted in consummated weddings in slightly less than half of all cases (twenty-nine successes and thirty-four failures). The majority of the Sui and Tang’s consummated interstate marriages (Table 7.1) and failed negotiations (Table 7.2) involved Turko-Mongol monarchs who had initiated talks, which alludes to the importance of steppe politics in encouraging Eastern Eurasian nuptial diplomacy.

The Sui-Tang strategy of diplomatic marriages varied according to the Eastern Eurasian balance of power. When the Sui and Tang were unified and militarily powerful, they tended to engage in “expansive” marriage diplomacy, forming nuptial relationships with intermediate powers in the borderland regions of Koko-nor,

Table 7.1. Sui-Tang Interstate Marital Relationships

<i>A. Great Powers of Mongolia/Inner Mongolia and Tibet</i>				
<i>Polity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Emperor</i>	<i>Background of Bride</i>	<i>Bride's Rank</i>
Türks	584	Sui Wendi	Previously married N. Zhou princess adopted into Sui's lineage	1a
	597	Sui Wendi	Unknown	1a
	599	Sui Wendi	Imperial collateral kin	1a
	617	Tang Gaozu (pre-dynastic)	Daughter/dancing girl?	unknown
Tibet	641	Taizong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	707	Zhongzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
Uighur	756	Suzong	Emperor's daughter	1a
	758	Suzong	Emperor's paternal granddaughter	1a
	769	Daizong	Pugu Huai'en's daughter raised in imperial palace	1a
	788	Dezong	Emperor's daughter	1a
	821	Muzong	Emperor's daughter	1a
<i>B. Intermediate Powers of China-Inner Asia Borderlands</i>				
Tuyuhun	596	Sui Wendi	Unknown	1a
	640	Taizong	Imperial kin	1a
	651	Gaozong	Imperial patrilineal kin	1b
	659	Gaozong	Imperial patrilineal kin	1b
Qay	717	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	726	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	745	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
Khitan	717	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	722	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	726	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
	745	Xuanzong	Imperial sororal kin	1a
W. Türks	614	Sui Yangdi	Unknown	1a
Türgish	706	Zhongzong	Palace women	unranked
	723	Xuanzong	Royal W. Türk lineage	1a

(continued)

Table 7.1. (continued)

<i>Polity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Emperor</i>	<i>Background of Bride</i>	<i>Bride's Rank</i>
<i>C. Minor Polities</i>				
Gaochang	614	Sui Yangdi	Imperial sororal kin?	1a
Shatuo	ca. 712	Ruizong or Xuanzong	Royal W. Türk lineage	5a
Farghānah	744	Xuanzong	Daughter of emperor's cousin	1a
Khotan	744	Xuanzong	Unknown	unknown

Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. The princesses who were bestowed were not daughters of emperors, but generally sororal kin, as they were female descendants of emperors' daughters. During periods of internal political weakness, Tang rulers engaged in "defensive" marital diplomacy with great powers in Mongolia. Forced to make concessions, emperors were more likely to initiate negotiations and give true daughters as brides. In two cases Empress Wu even agreed to accept royal Türk brides for her male relatives, but the weddings never took place. From Sui- to mid-Tang, expansive diplomacy was the norm while defensive diplomacy dominated after the An Lushan rebellion.

The Sui court attempted to use diplomatic marriages as part of an "expansive" strategy to divide and weaken the First Türk Empire. The first Sui-Türk marriage in 584 was perhaps the most unusual. Ishbara Qaghan had retreated south to Inner Mongolia and sought Sui aid because of pressure from the Western Türks and Khitan. To signal the warming relations, Ishbara's wife, the Qianjin Princess of the recently deposed Northern Zhou Dynasty, was adopted into the Yang lineage and thereby transformed into a Sui princess. From the Sui perspective, this experiment was an abject failure. The princess hated Emperor Wendi because he was a usurper responsible for the death of her father, and she worked to undermine Sui interests. After the death of Ishbara, Sui Wendi refused to bestow a bride on the powerful successor, Dulan, in 597, but instead granted a marriage to Dulan's defeated rival, Qimin Qaghan. Qimin moved his headquarters to Inner Mongolia. As part of his deal with the Sui, Qimin had worked surreptitiously to kill the Qianjin Princess. After Dulan's death, Qimin leveraged Sui military and financial support to become the leading Türk qaghan. Later Sui Yangdi felt that Qimin's successor, Shibi Qaghan, was becoming too powerful, and attempted to duplicate his father's policy of divide and rule by offering a bride to Shibi's younger brother. This time the diplomatic machinations backfired when Shibi blocked the marriage and began to raid the Sui (SS 84:1868–76; Pan 1997, 102–7, 127–8; 1997a, 109–10). The Sui



Table 7.2. Marriage Proposals with Failed or Unknown Outcomes

<i>Polity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Emperor</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Türks	597	Sui Wendi	Sui refused
	614	Sui Yangdi	Türk Shibi Qaghan blocked Sui offer of bride to his younger brother
	622	Gaozu	Gaozu proposed “renewed” marriage relations; Illig Qaghan accepted; outcome unknown
	623	Gaozu	Illig Qaghan proposed to Gaozu, who accepted in exchange for Türk-held Shuozhou in northern Hedong; Tang received the territory, but outcome of marriage is unknown
	624	Gaozu	Illig Qaghan proposed to Li Shimin (Taizong); Shimin accepted; Illig Qaghan procrastinated?
	629	Taizong	Illig Qaghan’s request ignored?
	643	Taizong	Taizong refused
	696	Empress Wu	Empress Wu accepted; Qapaghan Qaghan rejected male of Wu lineage as groom
	703–706	Zhongzong	Empress Wu accepted marriage of Zhongzong’s sons to Qapaghan’s daughters; Zhongzong canceled after becoming emperor
	711–713	Ruizong	Ruizong agreed to bestow patrilineal granddaughter; Xuanzong canceled after becoming emperor
	713	Xuanzong	Xuanzong agreed to bestow patrilineal female on Qapaghan Qaghan’s son, who died before wedding
	714	Xuanzong	Xuanzong accepted on condition that Türks send a hostage in exchange; Qapaghan Qaghan refused
	718	Xuanzong	Xuanzong accepted on condition that Bilgä Qaghan personally visit court to accept Tang investiture; Bilgä refused

(continued)

Table 7.2. (continued)

<i>Polity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Emperor</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
	721	Xuanzong	Xuanzong declined to consider the proposal until Türks ceased raiding
	724	Xuanzong	Xuanzong apparently refused
	726	Xuanzong	Xuanzong apparently refused
	734	Xuanzong	Xuanzong accepted, but Bilgä Qaghan died
W. Türks	611	Sui Yangdi	Unknown outcome
	622	Gaozu	No known Tang response
	623	Gaozu	No known Tang response
	625	Gaozu	Gaozu accepted, but Türks blocked passage of bride
	ca. 630	Taizong	Taizong refused because of lack of clear leadership
	646	Taizong	Taizong demanded an unreasonably large bride price; outcome unknown
Tuyuhun	591	Sui Wendi	Wendi refused
	ca. 630	Taizong	Taizong accepted; Tuyuhun prince refused to go to court to receive bride, fearing being held hostage; Taizong canceled
Sir-Yantuo	642	Taizong	Taizong accepted, then canceled after receiving large bride price
Uighur	813	Xianzong	Xianzong refused
	817	Xianzong	Xianzong refused
Tibet	638	Taizong	Taizong refused
	658	Gaozong	Gaozong refused
	680	Gaozong	Gaozong refused
	702	Empress Wu	Empress Wu accepted, but Tibetan <i>btsanpo</i> died
	757	Suzong	Suzong refused
Nanzhao	883	Xizong	Tang frontier official accepted, but marriage never occurred due to domestic disorder

expansive diplomatic strategy granted marriages to minor qaghans in Inner Mongolia in order to undermine the power of the supreme Türk qaghan in Mongolia. Even the marital ties to Ishbara Qaghan, when his Northern Zhou wife was transformed into a Sui wife, occurred at a time that he had been forced to retreat to Inner Mongolia.

The civil war at the end of the Sui forced Gaozu and Taizong to practice “defensive” marital diplomacy with the Türks in order to concentrate on the war in China. These Tang-Türk matches are not well-documented presumably because the historical record has been doctored to obscure “embarrassing” concessions. Consequently, these marriage negotiations have been overlooked in previous scholarship. The first nuptial arrangement came in late 617, before the Tang Dynasty was founded, when Gaozu was a regional warlord in northern Shanxi. Gaozu sent Shibi Qaghan a bride who, depending on the source, is described as a daughter or dancing girl (Table 7.1, note 6). The former would have been a humiliating sign of weakness. Gaozu’s proposal to Illig Qaghan for a “renewed” match in 622 after the official founding of the Tang was an especially embarrassing admission of impotence. Gaozu took the inferior position by making the offer at a time when several hundred thousand Türk light cavalry occupied the mountain passes of Central Hedong. The engagement seemingly grew closer to finalization in the following autumn when Gaozu insisted on the return of the strategically important prefecture of Shuozhou in northern Hedong as a condition for the marriage. Illig Qaghan agreed and his client warlord, Yuan Junzhang, abandoned Shuozhou, moving his base to Yunzhou (Datong) 120 kilometers away to the northeast (JTS 55:2255; XTS 92:3805; ZZTJ 190:5973; Wu 1998, 152–5). However, no record exists of a bride being sent to Illig Qaghan. In 624 Illig proposed marriage relations with Taizong, while the latter was still a prince. Taizong assented, but claimed at the time of Illig’s defeat in 630 that a wedding never occurred because of Illig’s intentional procrastination, presumably to continue raiding (Table 7.2, note 7; ZZTJ 191:5992–3; XTS 215a:6035). In all of these cases Gaozu and Taizong defensively engaged in marriage negotiations with a great power, the Türks, to reduce the threat of attacks on the northern frontier. Meanwhile, the Western Türks were making their own proposals to Gaozu, which he accepted in 625 to pursue a strategy of “allying with the distant in order to attack the near” (CFYG 978:12a; Graff 2002b, 37). However, Illig Qaghan blocked the wedding by cutting off the route to the west.

For the remainder of the seventh century, when the Tang military was experiencing a great deal of success with conquests of the Türks, Tuyuhun, Western Türks, and Sir-Yantuo, the Tang court showed less interest in establishing marriage relations with qaghans in Mongolia. However, to the west, Taizong and Gaozong became involved in nuptial ties to the Tuyuhun of Koko-nor, an intermediate power occupying a key strategic position as a buffer between the Tang and Tibet. Taizong invested their leader, Nuohebo, as Tuyuhun qaghan in 635 and supported him against pro-Tibetan rivals. Taizong approved Nuohebo’s request for a bride in 640,

most probably to bolster the qaghan's domestic position with a prestigious marriage. In the 650s Gaozong probably sought to fortify Nuohebo's line against opponents by bestowing princesses on Nuohebo's sons (JTS 198:5300; XTS 221a:6226; ZZTJ 195:6150, 196:6167, 201:6336; Molè 1970, 56–8, nn. 467, 470, 494). The Tang expansive diplomatic strategy, mirroring the earlier Sui approach to the Türks, sought to counter the rising power of Tibet. In both cases, closer and weaker rulers were supported with investiture and marriage to serve as buffers against more distant great powers.

In the late seventh and early eighth century, with the revival of the Second Türk Empire based in Mongolia and subsequent heavy raiding, Empress Wu made defensive concessions in marriage negotiations with Qapaghan Qaghan, but stalled and the weddings never occurred. Like Gaozu and Taizong's earlier deliberations with the Türks during the civil war, she perhaps assented to matches to buy time, without intending to carry through with the weddings. These negotiations will be discussed in the next section. She is not known to have discussed marriages with intermediate powers presumably because the Türks and Tibet controlled the borderland rulers.

The improved military position under Xuanzong allowed the revival of expansive diplomacy to isolate the Türks. In the process Xuanzong became the foremost practitioner of diplomatic marriage in Sui-Tang history. About half of the Tang's nuptial ties with foreign rulers were cemented during his reign. Most of the marriages that Xuanzong contracted were with intermediate Turko-Mongol powers bordering his empire in the northeast and northwest. For example, when Xuanzong engaged in marital alliances with the Qay and Khitan, which occupied contiguous regions in modern Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, his objective was to keep these tribal unions from uniting with the Türks and invading Hebei.<sup>8</sup> However, Xuanzong's willingness to arrange diplomatic marriages soured in 745 when Qay and Khitan qaghans killed their Tang brides to signal a revolt against Tang suzerainty (CFYG 979:14a). After this incident, Xuanzong abandoned diplomatic marriages for the remainder of his reign. Like investiture alone, marital ties at best only brought short-term stability to interstate relations. Torrid intratribal politics could undermine long-term Tang relations with marriage partners.

Suzong revived marriage as a tool of defensive diplomacy during the first year of the An Lushan rebellion when the Tang House was fighting for survival. The Uighur ruler, Gele Qaghan, had sufficient leverage to obtain a true daughter of the emperor in exchange for desperately needed cavalry for the Tang loyalist forces (chapter 8). Thereafter, the Uighur continued to receive favorable marriage terms because the Tang was a lesser empire and needed the Mongolia-based regime as a diplomatic counterweight to the Tibetan Empire. The next four marriages to the Uighur involved two true daughters, one foster daughter, and one paternal granddaughter. Uighur qaghans also received lavish dowries (Jagchid and Symons 1989, 49–59; Kuang 1935, 157–62). When the Uighur, Alp Qutlugh Bilgä Qaghan, proposed marrying Dezong's daughter in 787, the two sides agreed to a pact (*yue*), allegedly

modeled on an earlier one between Xuanzong and an unnamed “Türk Qaghan.” In exchange for the bride, the Uighur qaghan agreed to become a Tang official, return runaway Tang subjects, and adhere to annual limits of 1,000 horse sales and 200 diplomatic envoys.<sup>9</sup> The bestowal of a true daughter appears to have bought Dezong bargaining leverage that allowed him to win the other concessions.

Another element of contemporary defensive marriage diplomacy was that Tang emperors married true daughters to the families of local militarists in Hebei. Half of the strongmen belonged to lineages of foreign origin (Table 7.3<sup>10</sup>). These Hebei militarists already had official wives, so the unions generally were arranged with their sons and grandsons. Most studies of Tang marriage diplomacy have ignored these nuptial arrangements. For example, Wang Shouan (1999, 246–51) categorizes these as domestic bride bestowals to favored officials. Marital alliances with these northeastern satraps are further signs of the late Tang’s internal weakness.

A final notable element of Sui-Tang marriage diplomacy was the use of clients as proxies to establish marriage links with Turko-Mongol monarchs. Having failed to impose puppet qaghans over the Western Türk tribes (chapter 6), the Tang court tried to exert influence over the northwestern borderlands through marriage politics involving the daughters of the puppet, Ashina Huaidao. His eldest daughter was invested with the title of Jincheng County Mistress, nobility rank 5a, and wed to the ruler of the Shatuo bridle tribe, probably Shatuo Fuguo, around 712 (TMC 1:1223). Xuanzong’s marriage arrangement with Sulu of the Türgish in 723 involved another one of Huaidao’s daughters, who was invested as Jinhe Princess, rank 1a (JTS 194b:5191; ZZTJ 212:6714–5, 6754).<sup>11</sup> This match created a fascinating ménage à trois with Sulu simultaneously holding son-in-law relations with the Tang emperor and the nominal qaghan of the Western Türks. The symbolism would have been clear to all parties involved. The imperially bestowed ranks of the two daughters reflected the power of the recipient grooms, not the status of Ashina Huaidao, the father of the brides. Sulu, the powerful qaghan, received a bride ranked 1a, but the Shatuo commander-in-chief of a bridle prefecture was worthy of a woman with a lower noble rank of 5a. Ashina Huaidao may have hoped to benefit personally by leveraging the marriages to increase his influence over the western On Oq tribal union. This attempt to use proxy kinship to obtain diplomatic advantage can be judged a strategic failure because Sulu took Tibetan and Türk brides by 734, as will be discussed below.

A more successful effort to use proxy marriages to exert Tang influence occurred after the An Lushan rebellion. In 758 Daizong arranged the betrothal of the daughter of his Toghuz-Oghuz general, Pugu Huai’en, to the son of the Uighur qaghan. When the prince succeeded his father in 759, reigning as Bögü Qaghan, Daizong invested his wife, Pugu’s daughter, as a *qatun*. This action gave Tang recognition of her status as primary wife of the qaghan, but refrained from regarding her as a Tang princess. Pugu Huai’en’s position as father-in-law of the qaghan had strategic value because he was able to persuade Bögü Qaghan to provide military assistance to the

**Table 7.3. Tang Marital Relationships with Post-Rebellion Regional Warlords**

<i>Name of Groom</i>	<i>Ethnic Origin</i>	<i>Groom's Kinship w/ Warlord</i>	<i>Date of Marriage</i>	<i>Background of Bride's Rank Tang Bride</i>	
Zhang Maozong	Qay	Son of Zhang Xiaozhong	781	Emperor's daughter	1a
Zhang Keli	Qay	Grandson of Zhang Xiaozhong	Early 9 <sup>th</sup> c.	Emperor's daughter	1a
Tian Xu	Han, N. Hebei	Son of Tian Chengsi	785	Emperor's daughter	1a
Tian Hua	Han, N. Hebei	Son of Tian Chengsi	Unknown	Emperor's daughter	1a
Wang Shiping	Khitan	Son of Wang Wujun	786	Emperor's daughter	1a
Wang Chengxi	Khitan	Grandson of Wang Wujun	Early 9 <sup>th</sup> c.	Emperor's daughter	1a
Wang Yuankui	Uighur	Son of Wang Tingcou; Wang Wujun had adopted his great-great-grandfather	837	Female of collateral imperial lineage	1a
Liu Shijing	Han, Henan	Son of Liu Chang	Early 9 <sup>th</sup> c.	Emperor's daughter	1a
Yu Jiyou	Han, Henan	Son of Yu Di	807	Emperor's daughter	1a
Song Kan	Han, S. Hebei	Unknown	903	Emperor's daughter	1a

Tang (Mackerras 1973, 69–70, 76–7; Pan 1997a, 119, 131; Peterson 1970–1, 429). When this *qatun* died in 769, Bögü proposed marriage to a younger daughter of Pugu who had become Daizong's foster daughter. Daizong invested this woman with titles as *qatun* and Chonghui Princess, rank 1a (XTS 217a:6120; ZZTJ 224:7208; Mackerras 1973, 85, n. 129; Pan 1997a, 119, 131; Wang 1999, 291, 297). She became a fascinating example of simultaneous kinship because she was the orphaned daughter of an important Turkic elite in Tang service, foster child of a Tang emperor with a rank equivalent to a true daughter, and wife of a Uighur qaghan. This young woman was a desirable mate because her natal and foster lineages carried high prestige on the steppe.

## 2. *Turko-Mongol Strategic Culture*

Turko-Mongol rulers typically initiated marriage negotiations with the Sui and Tang. What were their motives? In part they wanted to use external marriage connections to realize external strategic objectives, but internal political considerations probably played a greater role. Marriages to the emperors of China-based dynasties carried enormous prestige that could bolster the status of a nomadic ruler. Marital bonds also implied exclusive ties with the Sui and Tang that, as in the case of investiture, denied domestic rivals a source of external support. In addition, the brides brought dowries that varied on size depending on the balance of power. Overall, the prestige of the marriages to Sui-Tang emperors seems to have been the greatest draw, but strong qaghans were unwilling to make too many concessions.

Turko-Mongol leaders could bolster their internal political position by intermarrying with the Sui or Tang. For example, during a civil war between rival qaghans of the Western Türks circa 630, the two adversaries dispatched separate embassies to propose marriages to Tang princesses. Taizong rejected both requests because of the political disunity (JTS 194b:5182; XTS 215b:6057; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 26, 54; Kuang 1935, 60–1). An even more illuminating case of the potential prestige value of marriages is the abortive attempt to arrange marital ties between the Tang and Sir-Yantuo in 642. Their leader, Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan, had risen from the lower elite to overthrow the Türks in 628. Zhenzhu Bilgä dispatched his great uncle to propose marriage relations in September 642 with gifts of three thousand horses, thirty-eight thousand sable pelts, and one horse head mirror (ZZTJ 196:6177). Taizong assented with the proviso that the qaghan return the captive Tang general, Qibi Heli (chapter 3). Zhenzhu Bilgä honored Taizong's condition and also sent further betrothal gifts of fifty thousand horses, ten thousand cattle and camels, and one hundred thousand sheep (JTS 109:3292, 194b:5345–6; XTS 110:4118, 217b:6136–7; ZZTJ 196:6179–80, 197:6199). To Zhenzhu Bilgä, the value of the marriage in the internal consolidation of power apparently encouraged him to spend lavishly.

Taizong's attitude toward the prospective marriage changed after the return of his loyal general, Qibi Heli, who advised Taizong to break the engagement. He predicted that a failed marriage would create internal dissent that could cause the fall of the Sir-Yantuo (JTS 3:55, 109:3292, 194b:5345–6; XTS 110:4118, 217b:6136–7; ZZTJ 197:6199–200; CFYG 978:22a–23a). To allow Taizong to renege without losing face, Qibi suggested that Taizong order Zhenzhu Bilgä to travel to Lingzhou to personally deliver the bride price. Qibi predicted that the qaghan would not dare make the journey. When Zhenzhu Bilgä received the invitation to travel to Lingzhou, his advisers, as predicted, told him to decline, to avoid a trap. The qaghan rejected this advice because he hungered for the prestige of a Tang bride and believed that Taizong was a man of integrity. Zhenzhu Bilgä said, "I originally was a minor chief



of the Tiele. The Son of Heaven [Taizong] appointed me qaghan. Now he wants to give me a princess in marriage and come personally to Lingzhou [to meet me]. This is ample" (JTS 194b:5346). Zhenzhu Bilgä apparently believed that a Tang princess would be especially valuable to a leader, like himself, who had risen from the lower elite to displace the royal Ashina Türks at the pinnacle of power. Although the qaghan was determined to make the trip to Lingzhou, his tribes resisted efforts to raise the bride price because they already had been taxed to supply the earlier betrothal gifts. When Zhenzhu Bilgä finally dispatched the second shipment, the animals arrived late and in poor condition after a harsh summer crossing of the Gobi desert. Taizong thereupon cancelled the wedding with the flimsy pretext of an inadequate bride price.<sup>12</sup>

After Taizong called off the marriage, literati Confucians at court raised objections that renegeing on the agreement would be morally dishonorable and likely to backfire because the Sir-Yantuo would attack due to resentment. Taizong's reply reveals the influence of Qibi Heli's understanding of Sir-Yantuo politics.

You ministers all know about the ancient times, but do not know the present . . . The Yantuo treat Us deferentially because they have newly come to power over various unrelated lineages. [Zhenzhu Bilgä] seeks to borrow the prestige of the Middle Kingdom in order to awe them. If these more than ten tribes—including the Tongra, Pugu, and Uighur each having several tens of thousands of soldiers—unite their forces to attack [Zhenzhu Bilgä], they can immediately destroy him. This is the reason he fears the Middle Kingdom and does not dare attack. If We agree to send a wife to him, it will strengthen the Middle Kingdom's son-in-law [Zhenzhu Bilgä]. If he is well respected, this will help to fortify his position. All of the tribes will follow him. Northern Barbarians are ruthlessly ambitious, prone to rebellion and asserting independence. Now if We call off the marriage and let all of the tribes hear of it, they will attack the Yantuo. We can expect their demise (ZZTJ 197:6201–2; XTS 217b:6137).<sup>13</sup>

Taizong viewed Zhenzhu Bilgä as a weak qaghan from a lower elite background who ruled by keeping outer tribes divided against each other. Taizong believed that a marriage to a Tang princess would bolster Zhenzhu Bilgä's charisma thereby helping him to attract followers, but the humiliation of a cancelled wedding would be enough to turn adherent tribes against him. Taizong and Qibi Heli overestimated the power of a rescinded betrothal agreement to bring down the qaghan. Nevertheless, Zhenzhu Bilgä's willingness to provide generous betrothal gifts and bride price to the Tang House betrays the high value he placed on the marriage. Incidentally, Taizong's cancellation of the nuptials—paralleling the murder of his

brothers and broken covenant with Illig Qaghan—exposes that he was as “ruthlessly ambitious” as any “Northern Barbarian” in exploiting Zhenzhu Bilgä’s hunger for marital ties.

Other illuminating examples of the relationship between power and the ability to command a prestigious match come from the Second Türk Empire. Qapaghan Qaghan’s heavy raiding gave him the greatest bargaining leverage of any steppe ruler since the founding years of the Tang. Qapaghan legitimized his invasion of north-east China in 698 by sending diplomatic letters to several Eastern Eurasian courts in which he claimed, among other things, that Empress Wu had reneged on an agreement to send the son of a former Tang emperor to marry Qapaghan’s daughter. Instead she had dispatched her male relative, Wu Yanxiu, whom Qapaghan alleged was a fraudulent substitute, belonging to the empress’s “minor” lineage, not equivalent in prestige to a male of the Tang House (JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6530–1). Qapaghan perceived that he was worthy of taking the superior position by bestowing a bride on a high status groom of the Li family. Subsequently, his ability to press the empress with raids forced a major concession in 703 when she consented to the betrothal of Qapaghan’s two daughters to sons of Zhongzong, the former Tang emperor and current heir apparent (JTS 194a:5170; XTS 215a:6047; ZZTJ 207:6562; CFYG 979:1b–2a). The empress evidently agreed to the match in exchange for a halt to raiding because there was peace from 703 to 706 (appendix A). However, she does not seem to have been eager to take the inferior position as bride acceptor. She stalled and the weddings never occurred during her reign. After she was deposed in 705, Zhongzong cancelled the engagement when Türk attacks resumed (JTS 194a:5170; XTS 215a:6047; ZZTJ 204:6607–8; CFYG 979:1b–2a). Qapaghan Qaghan was able to use the leverage of his raiding to force major concessions from Empress Wu, but apparently she artfully dodged and temporized to avoid the humiliation of weddings that placed her in an inferior position. Qapaghan subsequently compelled Ruizong and Xuanzong to commit to engagements involving females of the Tang House, but the weddings never took place because of continued Tang stalling, the death of Qapaghan’s son who was a prospective groom, and transitions in power on both sides (Table 7.2; Mori 1967, 192–3; Pan 1997a, 115–6).

Bilgä Qaghan also sought marriage relations with the Tang, but had less leverage than his uncle Qapaghan Qaghan. Bilgä made repeated proposals to Xuanzong from 718 onward, but never obtained a bride (Table 7.2). Xuanzong insisted that Bilgä accept the same terms as the Qay and Khitan, which included a personal visit to the Tang court and appointment as a bridle official. Bilgä resisted these humiliating concessions. Xuanzong declined Bilgä’s proposal in 721 because of a Türk raid in the previous year, but implied that the Tang might be open to future negotiations if the Türks demonstrated peaceful intentions (CFYG 980:6b–8b; T’ZLJB 33:1497, 1499–50; ZZTJ 212:6744; Kaneko 1988, 84–5). When a Tang diplomat visited the Türks in 725, a revealing exchange occurred when the Tang envoy entered the

qaghan's tent. Bilgä said, while inebriated, "The Tang has established marriage ties with the Tibetan sons of dogs, and the Qay and Khitan, former slaves of the Türks. Only the Türks have requested marriage ties from start to finish and have been refused. Why?" The Tang ambassador replied diplomatically that such marital bonds would be incestuous because the Tang emperor and qaghan had agreed to a father-son relationship. Bilgä retorted that Xuanzong had marriage relations with Khitan and Qay monarchs who used the Tang imperial surname, Li, and in any event these Tang brides were not the true daughters of the emperor. Bilgä's drunkenness caused him to add the indiscreet comment that "having made several unsuccessful proposals, we are a laughingstock among the various polities" (JTS 194a:5175; XTS 215b:6053–4; ZZTJ 212:6764–5). Bilgä repeatedly pressed for marriage alliances to bolster his prestige because he faced a relatively tenuous internal political situation (see chapter 1, Table 1.4). However, no marriage ever took place mainly because of Bilgä's unwillingness to become a Tang bride official, which would have diminished his stature. Although both parties finally sealed an engagement in 734, details of the agreement are unknown, and the wedding never occurred due to Bilgä's death soon thereafter (Table 7.2). Bilgä's general bargaining position stands in contrast to that of the Uighur qaghans, mentioned above, who had no compunction about becoming nominal Tang bride officials in exchange for true daughters of emperors.

### 3. *Material Incentives for Political Marriages*

Aside from prestige, nomadic rulers might have financial incentives to marry Tang brides. The material school of Sino-Inner Asian relations, as discussed in the next chapter, argues that Turko-Mongol rulers primarily sought imperial Chinese brides to profit from dowries and betrothal gifts. Below, an examination of known financial information about diplomatic marriages will demonstrate that payments flowed in both directions and tended to fluctuate according to the balance of power.

In China and Inner Asia during medieval times, the families of the bride and groom typically exchanged a bride price and dowry. Multiple nominal betrothal gifts, not formally part of the bride price and dowry, also might be exchanged before the wedding. Medieval Han Chinese and Turko-Mongols shared the custom of the groom's family paying a bride price that generally exceeded the value of the dowry provided by the bride's family (Barfield 1993, 147; Ebrey 1993, 83–8; Krader 1963, 342–51). The practices of imperial Chinese dynasts differed. The marriage of a Chinese princess, whether to a domestic or foreign groom, typically involved payments of dowry exceeding the value of the bride price to indicate the patrimonial generosity and social superiority of the imperial family (Holmgren 1991, 66). Information about exchanges of betrothal gifts, bride price, and dowry in diplomatic marriages between the Sui-Tang dynasties and Turko-Mongol rulers is sketchy, but is sufficient to confirm the existence of the practice.

Failed marriage negotiations provide evidence of the role that bride price played in the haggling over a match. For example, Yipi Shekui Qaghan of the Western Türks, who had just defeated a rival and was attempting to consolidate power, requested a bride from Taizong in 646. Taizong agreed to the proposal under the condition that Yipi pay a bride price of the oasis states of Kucha, Khotan, and Kashgar. Taizong's unreasonable demand signaled a lack of interest in the match. Not surprisingly, a marriage never occurred (ZZTJ 198:6236; JTS 194b:5185; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 32, 59; Kuang 1935, 61). An inadequate bride price was Taizong's excuse to turn down Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan in 642, but, as mentioned previously, Taizong's true motive was a nefarious attempt to undermine the Sir-Yantuo. Another example occurred in 724 when Tang Xuanzong declined a marriage proposal from Bilgä Qaghan, ostensibly because the bride price was too low (CFYG 979:7a-b).<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely that bride price was a true sticking point for Tang emperors in any of these negotiations. More plausibly it provided a polite pretense to spurn unwanted offers in genteel diplomatic discourse.

Quantities of livestock and other goods serving as betrothal gifts are mentioned in several cases. Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan delivered two enormous gifts, the total of which was 53,000 horses, 10,000 cattle and camels, 100,000 sheep, and 38,000 sable pelts. In contrast, when Qapaghan Qaghan settled an engagement with Empress Wu in 703, he delivered a token betrothal gift of 1,000 horses and other local products (JTS 194a:5170; XTS 215a:6047; ZZTJ 207:6568; CFYG 979:1b-2a). In a final known case, when Nuohebo of the Tuyuhun requested a marriage to a Tang princess in 639, the qaghan delivered a moderate betrothal gift of 10,000 horses, goats, and cattle (XTS 221a:6226; Molè 1970, 56). This limited evidence makes it difficult to reach conclusions about typical values of betrothal gifts and the extent to which the amounts were considered payments toward a total bride price. Nonetheless, calculations of power and status appear to have been involved. Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo, who had limited ability to raid China and had insecurities about social status, was willing to pay a high price for a prestigious match. The Tuyuhun qaghan, who had a precarious domestic position within a relatively small khanate, made a betrothal gift of an intermediate amount. Qapaghan Qaghan, militarily powerful and belonging to the prestigious royal Türk lineage, was confident enough to deliver a nominal betrothal gift.

The data on dowries also is limited. When Xuanzong married Tang princesses to the rulers of the Qay and Khitan tribes in Manchuria, some payments were made, but the extant records are unclear about whether the goods were considered dowries, betrothal gifts, or gifts associated with tribute missions. In 717 the Qay chief received 1,500 bolts of cloth while at court, around the time of his marriage (JTS 199b:5355). After returning home early in 718, he received an additional 6,000 bolts (CFYG 974:18b). When Qay and Khitan chiefs married Tang princesses in 722, each received 1,000 bolts of textiles, 70 silver wares, and

various other items including polychrome silk robes, and bejeweled belts (JTS 199b:5352; CFYG 975:1b). The amounts were not paltry, but were low in comparison to those paid to the Uighur after the An Lushan rebellion. In the 810s, one official's estimate of the cost of marrying a princess to the Uighur was 200,000 strings of bronze coins, roughly equivalent to 250,000 bolts of silk.<sup>15</sup> Based on this limited data, dowries seem to have played a lesser role in attracting Turko-Mongol rulers to marriage alliances with the Tang in the first half of the dynasty than in the second. A plausible hypothesis is that when the China-based empires were unified and militarily powerful, Turko-Mongol rulers sought Sui-Tang princesses primarily for status and strategic advantage and secondarily as sources of wealth.

## II. Fictive Kinship

Fictive kinship, like marriage diplomacy, derived from the patrimonial preference for modeling the polity on the household. Turko-Mongols normally receive more attention than Chinese for their emphasis on fictive kin relations in politics, but medieval North China provides many examples of artificial kinship between patrons and clients in the guises of fosterage, adoption, and surname bestowal. In the realm of politics, fictive relations drew together people of various backgrounds under a symbolic patriarch or matriarch. However, fictive kinship held secondary importance to marriage as an idiom of Eastern Eurasian diplomacy.

The shared patrimonial mindset of Eurasian rulers is revealed in diplomatic rhetoric expressing political relationships in terms of fictive kinship. For example, the Tang-Tibetan treaty of 732 was infused with patrimonial language, “the uncle [Tang Xuanzong] and nephew [Tibetan *btsanpo* Mes ag tshoms] have restored their old friendship and become one family” (CFYG 979:11b; Pan 1992b, 129–30, 153; Beckwith 1987, 101–7). In a letter ratifying the Sasanian-Byzantine treaty of 561, the Sasanian Emperor Khusrau addressed the Byzantine ruler Justinian as his brother (Blockley 1985, 63–5). Byzantine Emperors also baptized and adopted outer clients as sons who were considered to be part of a “family of kings” (Althoff 2004, 62–3; Nicol 1988, 57–8; Canepa 2010b, 141–2). After one of these fictive sons, the Avar Qaghan Baian, opened hostilities against his erstwhile Byzantine patron, an Avar envoy issued a veiled threat in the genteel language of kinship. He said “you [Emperor Justinian] are truly the father of Baian. . . I am sure that you are eager to show your love for your son by giving him the son's portion” (Blockley 1985, 139). The kinship rhetoric of Eurasian diplomacy seems to have been a widely shared convention.

Turko-Mongol society is noted for real or fictive kinship as a basis of common clan or tribal identity. Artificial consanguinity was expressed via adoption or genealogical manipulation, while individuals might join together via the blood brotherhood. The

mythical familial ties justified political unity (Krader 1963, 93–5, 192–9, 289–93; Khazanov 1994, 138–44; Lindner 1982, 698–701). Contemporary evidence of Turko-Mongol fictive kinship appears mainly in diplomacy. Tuli Qaghan and Taizong formed a blood brotherhood (chapter 3). Later, Qapaghan Qaghan requested to become Empress Wu's son (JTS 194a:5168; XTS 215a:6045; ZZTJ 206:6516). Xuanzong formed father-son relationships with Bilgä Qaghan (chapter 4) and Sulu of the Türgish (QJJ 11:5b–8a; QTW 286:10a–12b; WYYH 471:10a–11b). Other forms of fictive kinship mainly originating in North China or perhaps Manchuria—surname bestowal and fosterage and adoption of military clients—complemented some patron-client relationships. These will be discussed in detail below.

### A. Fictive Kinship Bonding in North China

During Sui-Tang times adoption and fosterage of sons appeared among palace eunuchs, who could not father children, and intermittently as adjuncts to patron-client bonding among military men of various ethnicities. Women sometimes served as the patrons. Among eunuchs the purpose was to produce an heir and perpetuate political power, and these cases resemble true adoptions in which the child takes the surname of the father (Wang 2004, 165–87). Military men most frequently engaged in relationships in which foster sons retained their original surnames. True adoptions are less common, perhaps because taking an heir from outside of the adoptive father's lineage violated Confucian norms and was illegal in Tang China.<sup>16</sup> Still, illicit adoptions existed, providing evidence that the legal system and Confucian values had an uneven hold over Sui-Tang society. Foster or adoptive relationship occurred between military men from North China and various parts of Inner Asia, but in the first half of the Tang most frequently appeared among soldiers with roots in northeast China and Manchuria.

Han Chinese military men from Hebei and northern Henan were more likely to favor a kinship idiom for patron-client relationships during the civil war of the Sui-Tang transition. As noted in chapter 3, the rebel warlord, Gao Kaidao from Hebei, and Tang general, Zhang Liang from Henan, had personal guards of several hundred men whom they treated as foster sons. In addition, the rebel warlord, Du Fuwei from northern Henan, had over thirty foster sons. Each one headed one division of Du's army and received identical provisions of food and clothing (JTS 92:3801; XTS 56:2270; Mao 2001, 52). Foster relationships also existed in single patron-client dyads. The Sui general turned warlord, Wang Shichong, became the foster son of the Sui Dowager Empress Liu (ZZTJ 189:5839). Another example is Su Dingfang from Jizhou in south central Hebei. After his father was killed, Su joined the forces of the warlord Dou Jiande, whose general Gao Yaxian raised Su as a foster son. After Dou's defeat, Su accompanied Gao in rendering allegiance to another rebel warlord, Liu Heita. When Gao and Liu later were killed in battle, Su retired from fighting until reemerging as a Tang military officer several years later (JTS



83:2777; XTS 111:4136–7). All of these cases of fictive kinship involved people with Han Chinese names from Hebei and Henan.

Some of the most colorful and controversial cases of fictive kinship appear in the career of the Turko-Sogdian general turned rebel, An Lushan, who grew up in the northern Hebei borderlands and served in its armies. While still a junior officer, An became the foster son of the Han Chinese general from Hebei, Zhang Shougui (d. 739) (des Rotours 1962, 12–3, n. 4). More unusually, the emperor Xuanzong's favorite concubine, Yang Guifei, allegedly formed a sworn mother-son relationship with An Lushan. The emperor may have approved because he ordered Yang Guifei's three sisters to treat An Lushan like a brother (ZZTJ 216:6903; des Rotours 1962, 43–6). The story may be apocryphal, but an elite female adopting an adult male seems credible because, as mentioned above, the Sui Dowager Empress Liu had taken Wang Shichong as a foster son. An Lushan also had his own foster sons who formed a bodyguard of eight thousand men (chapter 3).

Another instructive case is that of Li Baochen, a Qay tribesman from the vicinity of Fanyang, a major Tang garrison city in northern Hebei (chapter 1, Map 1.4). In his youth he excelled at mounted archery and became the adoptive son of the Fanyang general Zhang Suogao, whose background is unknown. This can be categorized as an adoption, rather than a foster relationship, because at this point in his life Li Baochen was named Zhang Zhongzhi. His excellence at archery caught the attention of An Lushan who appointed him to be an Officer of the Bowmen (*shesheng guan*) and probably cultivated him as a client. When Zhang Zhongzhi (Li Baochen) was in An's entourage on a visit to court, An apparently made a gift of his client to the emperor Xuanzong. Zhang remained in the capital and became a member of the bowmen of the imperial bodyguard. When An Lushan raised troops in rebellion, Zhang fled back to Hebei. An Lushan, of course, was pleased at the loyalty of this client and brought him even closer by adopting him as a son. Now named An Zhongzhi, he became an important military commander in the rebellion. After the death of An Lushan, he was in control of Hengzhou in Hebei and eventually gave nominal allegiance to the Tang court. The emperor officially appointed him prefect of Hengzhou and bestowed the imperial surname and a new given name upon him. He became known as Li Baochen "Treasured Official," symbolically adopted into the imperial family (JTS 142:3865–6; XTS 211:5945; ZZTJ 222:7136). In his lifetime, Li Baochen served as the adoptive son of three patrons in succession, including the notorious An Lushan and a Tang emperor!

Other cases of patron-client relationships, at least one of which involved an officer with Manchurian tribal roots, appear in the mid-eighth century. Two of Li Baochen's client officers also engaged in similar filial-like relations with him and each other. One was the second-generation Khitan officer, Wang Wujun. The other was a first-generation Uighur, Wugezhi. Li Baochen and Wugezhi treated each other like father and son, but then Wugezhi developed an even closer relationship with Wang Wujun. Wang "loved" Wugezhi, adopted him and gave him the Wang



surname (JTS 142:3871, 3884–5; XTS 211:5959). In another case, Shang Kegou was born into the Yuwen tribe of the Eastern Sārbi and submitted to An Lushan at Fanyang on the eve of An's rebellion. Shang abandoned the rebels around 760 to serve as grand general of the Tang's Shence Army. His commander, a Sichuanese eunuch-general, Yu Chao'en, admired Shang's bravery and adopted him as a son with the new name of Yu Zhide. After Yu Chao'en was executed in 770, the emperor symbolically adopted Shang Keyu/Yu Zhide by bestowing the imperial surname upon him. He became known as Li Jiaxun (JTS 144:3911, 184:4765; XTS 110:4128). In a final example, a post-rebellion Tang general, Li Huaiguang, whose ancestors were the Malgal people of Manchuria, treated a "barbarian from the Western Regions" (Xiyu *huren*), Shi Yanfen, as a foster son (JTS 121:3491, 187b:4907–8; XTS 193:5555, 224a:6375; Peterson 1979, 505–7). Obviously, a multiethnic array of men in North China, including Tang emperors, used the idiom of fictive kinship to reinforce patron-client bonds.

As an occasional accompaniment to the more widespread phenomenon of patron-client bonding, fictive kinship became an additional source of political solidarity among military men, and sometimes women, of many different ethnicities. The practice apparently was most prevalent during times of civil disorder and perhaps reached its peak during the turbulent post-Tang era of the Five Dynasties (Dai 2000). Evidence of adoption and fosterage of military clients was unknown in contemporary Turko-Mongol societies, but military men of all ethnicities in North China, especially those with origins in Manchuria, seemed prone to engage in this type of relationship. The ties to Manchuria are affirmed among the Khitan in post-Tang times. The Liao dynastic founder Taizu had a personal bodyguard of two thousand men from various tribes, some of whom were adopted into his Yelü lineage. Adoption of loyal adherents into the Yelü and other lineages continued throughout the dynasty, to the extent that the consort Xiao "clan lost its original structure, becoming a group of fictive kin bound together by a common surname" (Holmgren 1986a, 47–9, 87–8). Fictive membership in a high-status lineage would have been a special honor accorded to particularly valued clients.

## B. Imperial Surname Bestowal

The Tang court sometimes bestowed the imperial Li surname to attract the allegiance of provincial militarists, as mentioned above. Imperial surname bestowal (*cixing*) was a symbolic form of adoption, and corresponded to princess bestowal as a patrimonial reward that strengthened the political bonds of investiture and appointment. Emperors of various Chinese dynasties bestowed the imperial family's surname "as a mark of special privilege and a recognition of distinguished service and loyalty" (Dien 1977, 142). Apparently, high points of this practice were the Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Tang, and Five Dynasties whose rulers gave special attention to creating a patrimonial political family (Dien 1977; Eberhard 1965, 150;

Pearce 1987, 411–5). Like adoption and fosterage, surname bestowal apparently has obscure origins in North China and the China-Inner Asia borderlands.

Yuwen Tai initiated a policy of surname bestowal in the 530s while serving as the power behind the newly founded Western Wei Dynasty, perhaps as a means of creating an informal network of clients. Yuwen Tai bestowed his and other Sārbi surnames upon allied generals, civil officials, and local strongmen in Shaanxi, creating a precedent for conferring surnames on a larger scale than had ever occurred in Chinese history. The practice continued after his sons established the Northern Zhou Dynasty. An abrupt volte-face occurred when Yang Jian seized power from the Northern Zhou and reigned as Sui Wendi. In preparation for his full usurpation of authority, he rescinded previously bestowed names in January 581. Ostensibly a major justification for his action was that the former policy violated Confucian norms, forcing men “to arrange their ancestral tablets among those of strangers” (ZS 8:135; Dien 1977, 165–6). Left unstated was Sui Wendi’s need to erase overt signs of loyalty to the Northern Zhou Dynasty, including his family’s own Sārbi surname of Puliuru (SS 1:1; Dien 1977, 171). Thereafter, Wendi and his successor Yangdi only are known to have bestowed their Yang surname in one exceptional case.<sup>17</sup>

In the wake of the collapse of the Sui, the Tang founder, Li Yuan (Gaozu), reinstated the practice of granting surnames. Like Sui Wendi, Li Yuan was familiar with this custom. His grandfather had been awarded the surname Daye in the 550s. As a fifteen-year-old boy in 581, the future Tang founder experienced a change in his surname from Daye to Li when Sui Wendi rescinded Sārbi names (JTS 1:1; XTS 1:1; Dien 1977, 171). Political circumstances may have encouraged the Tang return to the Western Wei/Northern Zhou custom. While Sui Wendi came to power rapidly in a coup d’état and thereafter sought to erase memories of the Northern Zhou (Wright 1978, 59–63), the establishment of the Tang during a long civil war resembled the Western Wei founding. Table 7.4 depicts known bestowals in the period from 580 to 800. Even though extant evidence must underreport the true extent of the practice, sufficient data is available to reveal distinctive preferences of emperors.<sup>18</sup> Most striking is the increased number of surname bestowals from Sui to the early Tang, apparently meant to draw regional warlords into loyalty to Gaozu. All nine bestowals of surnames known to have occurred during Gaozu’s reign occurred from 618 to 622 when fighting was most intense and the Tang position still was tenuous. Two of the nine cases were rewards for valor in battle, but the other seven accompanied the investiture and appointment of outer clients who had agreed to submit to Tang authority. For example, Gao Kaidao (Table 7.4: #6) accepted the concurrent titles of Beiping Commandery Prince and Yu Prefecture Commander-in-Chief. The Jihu qaghan, Liu Jizhen (Table 7.4: #8), received similar treatment. A notable case of these early surname bestowals involved the Türk, Tegin Dazai (Table 7.4: #7), who was awarded the name Shi, an abbreviated and sinicized version of the royal Türk surname Ashina. Perhaps Gaozu had planned to institute Yuwen Tai’s

former system of bestowing surnames that were not necessarily the imperial one, but the experiment was not repeated. At least two of the bestowals involved warlords who had created guard corps of foster sons, Du Fuwei (Table 7.4: #5) and Gao Kaidao (Table 7.4: #6). Gao, Du, and their networks of foster sons were thus symbolically incorporated into the Tang patrimonial political family.

If Tang Gaozu's surname bestowals on outer clients were meant to create closer patron-client ties, the policy was of mixed success. Some warlords like Gao Kaidao, who remained relatively independent, later turned against the Tang and were killed. Even though Xu Shiji (Table 7.4: #3), best known as Li Shiji, became one of the Tang's most famous and loyal generals, his fidelity must be related to his removal from his power base and direct incorporation into the Tang army (Graff 2002a, 184–5). Nevertheless, Gaozu's reign established a precedent for surname bestowal for valor in battle and more frequently as a means of enticing outer clients to cleave to the Tang.

Taizong's reign gave greater emphasis to bestowing surnames to facilitate external expansion. Taizong's seven instances (Table 7.4: #11–16) accompanied investiture and appointment of outer clients living in the China-Inner Asia borderlands. Two cases with long-term impact were the Khitan (Table 7.4: #15) and Qay (Table 7.4: #16) chiefs, who first received the Li surname in 648 when they agreed to become bridle tribes. Thereafter, the Tang imperial surname was inherited for several generations until the middle of the eighth century, evidently carrying enough prestige to be perpetuated by the royal lineages (JTS 199b:5350–6; XTS 219:6168–75; Wang n.d., 21–2). On the other hand, the bestowal of the Li surname on Ashina Simo (Table 7.4: #14), which accompanied his investiture as Türk qaghan in 639, may have represented a personal honor, but did not have a long-term impact on Türk politics. When Simo's followers rebelled against him, a cousin who had retained the Ashina surname was placed in power. Simo's descendants, who continued to use the Li surname, were excluded from Türk leadership (JTS 194a:5163–5, 199b:5344; XTS 215a:6039–41; ZZTJ 195:6148–9, 198:6250; QTW 10:118). Regardless of impact, Taizong's innovation of awarding imperial surnames exclusively to borderland clients broke with the Western Wei-Northern Zhou-early Tang tradition of bestowals mainly supporting the domestic consolidation of power. Under Taizong, the zone of uncertain political allegiances, where grants of the imperial surname were appropriate, had shifted from the center to the northern periphery where China and Inner Asia intersected.

Despite Taizong's precedent, Gaozong's reign lacks records of surname bestowals. However, some indirect evidence indicates that the practice continued. For example, after Gaozong's conquest of the Western Türks, a tribal leader named Li Zhefu appears in the historical record.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the paucity of surviving examples of surname awards during Gaozong's reign parallels his decreased emphasis on marriage as a tool of diplomacy. His unparalleled success at expanding militarily to the northeast and northwest apparently diminished the need to bestow surnames and brides on outer clients.

The custom of bestowing surnames intensified under Empress Wu's Zhou Dynasty, but she targeted inner clients in the palace more than outer clients on the borderlands. Twelve of the fourteen instances of surname bestowal under Empress Wu involved men and women at court (Table 7.4: #17–28). Moreover, eleven of the twelve cases of court bestowals occurred in the first and second years of the Zhou Dynasty when she was consolidating power. The cases at court can be considered somewhat analogous to those on the frontier because in both circumstances fictive kinship relations were created to solidify uncertain political allegiances. Having taken the unprecedented step of founding a female-ruled dynasty, the palace bestowals of the Wu surname reveal her anxieties about loyalties of those closest to the throne, including civil officials and male and female members of the Tang House. After Empress Wu was deposed in 705, a few other court bestowals continued in the subsequent turbulent years of palace intrigue and bloodletting, concluding with Xuanzong's full consolidation of power in 713.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, these years of increased emphasis on fictive kin bonding in the palace were accompanied by much intrafamilial bloodletting.

The reigns of Empress Wu and Xuanzong also continued the bestowal of the imperial surname on outer clients in the China-Inner Asia borderlands, but several innovations occurred. In a unique case, the wife and mother (Table 7.4: #30) of Qibi Ming, the bridle chief in Hexi, were bestowed the Wu surname, perhaps for valor at defending the frontier during a period of heavy Türk raiding.<sup>21</sup> Empress Wu also is distinctive in bestowing inauspicious given names on outer clients who rebelled or raided her empire. After a Khitan attack on Hebei in 696, she issued an edict changing the given names of the leaders. Li Jinzhong (Absolute Loyalty) became Li Jinmie (Absolute Annihilation). Sun Wanrong (Myriad Glory) was transformed to Sun Wanzhan (Myriad Beheadings) (JTS 199b:5350; XTS 219:6169; ZZTJ 205:6506).<sup>22</sup> Xuanzong's reign is marked by a related practice of bestowing the Li surname and an auspicious given name on outer clients (Table 7.4: #33–36). For example, when the Sumpa tribal leader Xi'nuoluo (Table 7.4: #36) broke with Tibet and submitted to the Tang, Xuanzong invested him as Huaiyi King and bestowed the name, Li Zhongxin (Loyally Trustworthy). Auspicious given names, incantations with perhaps a psychological and magical power to encourage future fidelity, became the norm for the remainder of the dynasty.

During the An Lushan rebellion, like the civil war of the Sui-Tang transition, the targets of surname bestowals were military men in the interior of the empire, a new zone of uncertain allegiances to the imperial center. Most received felicitous given names in a continuation of Xuanzong's practice. For example, Dong Qin (Table 7.4: #38) was a general of unclear ethnicity whose new name, Li Zhongchen (Loyal Official), honored his military valor. Also analogous to the Sui-Tang civil war, two of the bestowals involved military men, mentioned above, who had been adopted and granted auspicious given names earlier in life: Zhang Zhongzhi/An Zhongzhi (Loyal Aspiration), who became Li Baochen (Treasured Official, Table 7.4: #39),

Table 7.4. **Sui and Tang Surname Bestowals, 580–800**

#	Original name	Emperor	Yr.	Name granted	Background	Reason for bestowal	Citations
1	Lady Yuwen	Sui Wendi	584	Yang	N. Zhou Dynasty princess married to Türk qaghan	Change of Türk marriage alliance from N. Zhou to Sui	SS 84:1870–2; ZZTJ 176:5475
2	Bing Yuan-hong	Gaozu	ca. 618	Li	Southern Shaanxi local elite	Submission to Tang	JTS 98:3073; XTS 126:4419
3	Xu Shiji	Same	619	Li	Northeastern warlord's military officer	Submission to Tang	JTS 1:9; 57:2484; XTS 93:3818; ZZTJ 186:5822
4	Luo Yi	Same	619	Li	Northwestern warlord	Submission to Tang	JTS 1:10, 56:2278; XTS 92:3806
5	Du Fuwei	Same	620	Li	Northeastern warlord	Submission to Tang	JTS 1:11, 56:2268; XTS 92:3800; ZZTJ 188:5884
6	Gao Kaidao	Same	620	Li	Northeastern warlord	Submission to Tang	JTS 55:2256; ZZTJ 188:5892
7	Tegin Dazai	Same	ca. 620	Shi	W. Türk elite, former Sui client in N. Shanxi	Valor in battle	JTS 194b:5180; XTS 110:4111
8	Liu Jizhen	Same	620	Li	Jihu qaghan in N. Shanxi	Submission to Tang	JTS 1:10, 56:2282; ZZTJ 188:5879
9	Hu Da'en	Same	621	Li	Warlord military officer	Submission to Tang	JTS 1:11; ZZTJ 188:5900
10	Guo Zihe	Same	622	Li	Northwestern warlord	Valor in battle	JTS 56:2282; XTS 92:3804; ZZTJ 190:5953
11	Tudiji	Taizong	627	Li	Malgal tribal leader submitted to Tang	Valor in battle	JTS 199b:5359; XTS 110:4123

(continued)

Table 7.4. (continued)

#	Original name	Emperor	Yr.	Name granted	Background	Reason for bestowal	Citations
12	Qu Wentai	Same	630	Li	King of Gaochang	Visit to Tang court	XTS 221a:6220
13	Tabgach Chici	Same	ca. 635	Li	Tangut tribal leader	Submission to Tang	JTS 198:5292; XTS 221a:6215
14	Ashina Simo	Same	639	Li	Türk elite; Tang client since 630	Invested as qaghan	JTS 194a:5163
15	Dahe Kuge	Same	648	Li	Khitan tribal leader	Submission to Tang	JTS 199b:5349–50
16	Keduzhe	Same	648	Li	Qay tribal leader	Submission to Tang	JTS 199b:5354
17	Lady Li	Empress Wu	690	Wu	Daughter of Gaozu; Client of Empress Wu	Lady Li requested Wu surname	ZZTJ 204:6467
18	Fu Youyi	Same	690	Wu	Court official & close client of Empress Wu	Led petitioners seeking Zhou Dynasty founding	JTS 186a:4842; ZZTJ 204:6467
19	Tang Ruizong	Same	690	Wu	Son of Gaozong & Empress Wu	Deposed as emperor	ZZTJ 204:6467
20	Lai Zixun	Same	690	Wu	Court official; Close client of Empress Wu	Consolidation of power at court	JTS 186a:4846; ZZTJ 204:6468
21	Cen Chang-qian	Same	690	Wu	Same	Same	ZZTJ 204:6468
22	Zhang Qianxu	Same	690	Wu	Same	Same	ZZTJ 204:6468
23	Qiu Shenji	Same	690	Wu	Same	Same	ZZTJ 204:6468
24	Li Guangxun	Same	691	Wu	Son of deceased Crown Prince Li Xián	Same	ZZTJ 204:6473

25	Li Shouli	Same	691	Wu	Same	Same	ZZTJ 204:6473
26	Li Shouyi	Same	691	Wu	Same	Same	ZZTJ 204:6473
27	Changxin Princess	Same	691	Wu	Daughter of deceased Crown Prince Li Xián	Same	ZZTJ 204:6473
28	Li Xian/ Li Zhe	Same	699	Wu	Zhongzong; Son of Gaozong & Empress Wu	Promoted to heir apparent	ZZTJ 206:6534, 6539
29	Li Jiegu	Same	700	Wu	Khitan tribal elite submitted to Zhou	Valor in battle	ZZTJ 206:6547–8
30	Qibi Ming's mother and wife	Same	690–705	Wu	Qibi Ming was bridle chief of Qibi tribe	Unknown	XTS 110:4121
31	Huan Yanfan	Zhongzong	705	Wei	Client of Zhongzong's wife Empress Wei	Consolidation of power	JTS 7:139, 91:2930; ZZTJ 208:6603
32	Xue Chongjian	Xuanzong	713	Li	Son of Taiping Princess	Attempted to dissuade mother from plotting against Xuanzong	ZZTJ 210:6685
33	Unknown	Same	728	Li Xiancheng	Chief of the Amur (Black) River Malgal	Submission to Tang	JTS 199b:5359
34	Ru Chang	Same	unknown	Li Jiaqing	Malgal local elite in N. Hebei	Valor in battle	JTS 121:3491; ZZTJ 223:7147
35	Abuz [Abusi] Yabghu	Same	752	Li Xianzhong	Turkic elite	Submission to Tang	ZZTJ 210:6685

(continued)



Table 7.4. (continued)

#	Original name	Emperor	Yr.	Name granted	Background	Reason for bestowal	Citations
36	Xi'nuoluo	Same	755	Li Zhongxin	Prince of Sumpa (Supi)	Submission to Tang	ZZTJ 217:6932
37	An Baoyu	Suzong	757	Li	Descendant of An Xinggui, northwestern warlord official who submitted to Tang in 621	Requested to change surname from An to Li after An Lushan rebellion	JTS 132:3646; ZZTJ 221:7075
38	Dong Qin	Same	759	Li Zhongchen	N. Hebei local elite; Pre-rebellion, served in An Lushan's forces, but did not join An's revolt	Valor in battle	JTS 145:3941; ZZTJ 221:7088
39	Zhang Zhongzhi/An Zhongzhi	Daizong	762	Li Baochen	Qay local elite from N. Hebei; Participated in An Lushan's revolt	Submission to Tang	JTS 142:3865–6; XTS 211:5945
40	Shang Kegou/ Yu Zhide	Same	ca. 770	Li Jiaxun	Eastern Sārbi of Yuwen lineage; Client of An Lushan then Tang eunuch, Yu Chao'en	Unknown	See citations in text
41	Mr. Yan	Dezong	789	Li Chengxu	Matrilineal grandson of Malgal general, Li Huaiguang, whose patrilineal descendants all were killed in battle	Reward for Li Huaiguang's loyal service	See citations in text; JTS 13:368, 121:3495; ZZTJ 233:7519

and Shang Kegū/Yu Zhīde (Wise Virtue), who became Li Jiāxun (Meritorious Service, Table 7.4: #40). These post-rebellion military men in Hebei who accepted fictive kinship parallel the cases of contemporary regional militarists who received Tang brides (Table 7.3). In an unsettled empire, the imperial center resorted to using fictive and affinal kinship to control the provinces.

Surname bestowals should be viewed as another means by which emperors sought to increase the size of the patrimonial political family. About one-third of known bestowals occurred at the court in the period from 690 to 713, when women and men within the imperial family were vying for power. The other two-thirds of bestowals were awarded continually to martial clients who submitted to Tang authority. Overall, however, awards of the Li surname were the exception, not the norm, in relations with outer clients, which routinely involved investiture or appointment. When regional militarists and pastoral nomadic rulers coveted closer relations to the Sui or Tang, they requested marriages, not surname bestowals. The only two documented requests for surnames involved members of the Tang elite who sought to reaffirm their loyalty to a reigning emperor.<sup>23</sup>

Even though Turko-Mongol rulers are not known to have requested imperial surnames, fictive kinship to the Tang had political value to some. The cases of the Khitan and Qay ruling lineages, which passed down the Tang imperial surname for a century, were mentioned previously. Tang-Kirghiz relations are even more illuminating. The two parties claimed common descent from the Han general Li Guang (d. 119 BCE). Zhongzong acknowledged acceptance of the Kirghiz as kin when he told a visiting envoy, “Your country and Ours are of the same ancestral lineage. You are not like other foreigners.”<sup>24</sup> Although the Tang sources do not mention any substantive issues connected to the banter over kinship, deeper strategic purposes, relating to an alliance against the Second Türk Empire, seem to underlay the court visit. The Kirghiz, living in the southern Siberian steppe, were on the northern flank of the Türks, while the Tang lay to the south. The Kirghiz embassy to the Tang, occurring at some point between 707 and 710, was followed by a Türk attack on the Kirghiz in 711 in retaliation for Bars Beg Qaghan’s unexplained “betrayal,” probably related to an alliance with the Tang (Klyashtornyi 2004, 38; Tekin 1968, 266, 269, 276).<sup>25</sup> Much later in 843, Tang Wuzong sent a letter to the Kirghiz qaghan reminding him of their shared kinship to encourage Kirghiz attacks against the Uighur. The Kirghiz were entered into Tang lineage registers at this time (XTS 221b:6159; Drompp 2005b, 126, 183, 290–1). Clearly both sides sought to justify strategic cooperation based on common fictive descent.

Aside from providing a mutually recognized idiom of diplomatic discourse, fictive kinship to the Li family held varying levels of prestige value. The Shatuo and Tangut demonstrate a propensity of borderland rulers to continue to use the Li surname after the fall of the Tang. The Shatuo leader Li Keyong, whose father had been awarded the imperial Li surname in 869, used his fictive kinship relations

with the Tang emperors to justify founding the short-lived Later Tang Dynasty (923–936) (Eberhard 1965, 157–8; Somers 1979, 700). Even as late as the twentieth century in Koko-nor several Monguor clans named Li continued to cling to the vestigial prestige of the Shatuo and Tang by claiming legendary descent from Li Keyong.<sup>26</sup> The Tangut exhibited an even more complex inclination to trumpet connections to past dynasties of China, including the Tabgach of the Northern Wei and Li of the Tang. The ruling Tangut lineage used the surname Tabgach as early as the seventh century. After the bestowal of the Li surname in 635, the lineage began to use Tabgach and Li simultaneously.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps to counter loyalties to these two past dynasties, the Song court bestowed its Zhao surname on the Tangut ruler in 991. When Tabgach/Li /Zhao Yuanhao established the Xi Xia Dynasty (1038–1227) in the vicinity of Tang borderland prefecture of Lingzhou, the founder and his related inner lineages took a new surname of Weiming (Tangut: Nwei-mi). He discontinued use of Zhao, signaling a break with the Song, but still claimed lineal descent from the Tabgach rulers of the Northern Wei and preserved the Li surname as recognition of the military valor of his ancestors (Dunnell 1994, 180–1; 1996, 36).<sup>28</sup> The new Weiming surname staked out an independent Tangut identity, while past relations with the Li and Tabgach were retained to trumpet their “political ancestry.”<sup>29</sup> The Tangut provide perhaps the most powerful example of the multivalent prestige and propaganda value of fictive kinship.

Although borderland Shatuo and Tangut dynastic founders found it to be politically expedient to exploit fictive descent from the Tang, this was not universally true in the post-Tang era. In Manchuria the Liao dynasts belonged to the Khitan Yelü lineage, whose ancestors had never been bequeathed the Li surname, an honor reserved for the rival Dahe lineage. Yelü emperors thus had no interest in portraying themselves as fictive kin of the Tang, but instead addressed the Xi Xia emperors, their perceived inferiors, using the Li surname (Dunnell 1994, 181; Twitchett and Tietze 1994, 52–3). Still, this demonstrates a Khitan propensity to manipulate surnames and genealogies to achieve political ends. The intertwining of kinship and politics in Turko-Mongol societies may explain the propensity of Tang emperors to bestow their imperial surname on Inner Asian rulers, who in turn valued fictive relations when it was politically expedient.

The origin of the kinship idiom to express patron-client bonds in North China is less clear, but historians have proposed external and internal causes. An Lushan’s notorious bodyguard of foster sons is a frequently cited argument for external causes, but the focus on this specific case ignores that the habit of treating clients as foster sons was relatively common among military men in Hebei in the previous century.<sup>30</sup> Some scholars examining fosterage, adoption, or surname bestowal argue that these must be Turko-Mongol customs. On the other hand, Turko-Mongols normally did not use surnames. And even though men of Manchurian origin seem to have had a propensity to engage in these relationships in North

China, there is no evidence of adoption or fosterage among Turko-Mongol military men in Manchuria or other regions of Inner Asia until the post-Tang era. Other scholars argue for internal origins of fictive kinship. Some studying surname bestowal argue it met Yuwen Tai's need to consolidate power after leading his troops to southern Shaanxi during the civil war at the end of the Northern Wei (Pearce 1987, 412–7; Gu 1962, 34–6). A different perspective comes from cultural historians who note that the popularization of Confucian filial piety (*xiao*) in the third through sixth centuries encouraged clients to treat and mourn their patrons like fathers (Brown 2007, 96–100; Gan 2003, 291–308; Knapp 2005, 20–6, 155–6).

The internal and external explanations are both plausible and can contribute to a hypothesis that surname bestowal, fosterage, and adoption were related phenomena with roots in the conflicts and intercultural politics of medieval North China. Two clues point in this direction. One, the Sārbi rulers of the Northern Dynasties, who originated in Manchuria, took a particular interest in filial piety (Dien 1991, 46–7, 55; Juliano and Lerner, eds. 2001b, 80–1). Regardless of whether Sārbi filial piety was a preexisting custom or sign of their assimilation into Chinese society, it became a shared cultural tradition under Northern Wei rule. Subsequently, at least two important members of the northwestern elite, Yuwen Tai and Sui Wendi, believed a client should treat his patron like a father (Gan 2003, 299–300). Yuwen Tai not only encouraged foster relationships, but also became the foremost practitioner of surname bestowal. Two, the backgrounds of outer clients who were awarded Tang imperial surnames roughly parallel those of military men involved in foster and adoptive patron-client ties, who generally formed bonds in situations of political uncertainty in North China. Of the forty-one bestowals in Table 7.4, seventeen (41 percent) involved Inner Asians and nine (22 percent) involved Han regional elites or warlords. Just over half of the Inner Asians awarded the imperial surname originated in Manchuria (Khitan, Qay, and Malgal). The Han are almost evenly divided between northeastern and northwestern China.<sup>31</sup> Even more direct evidence for overlap of the practices is that four men awarded the Li surname earlier had engaged in foster or adoptive relations with fellow warriors (Table 7.4: #5, #6, #39, #40). Based on the two above points, a plausible hypothesis is that surname bestowal, fosterage, and adoption all derived from a shared preference in North China and Inner Asia for creating political relationships on the basis of fictive kinship during periods of political instability. Moreover, the frequent bestowals of surnames and auspicious given names on outer clients of dubious allegiance also may be connected to the Chinese belief that “names contained powerful magic. . .to cultivate good fortune and avoid unlucky influences” (Rothschild 2006, 2008b, 9). Thus, surname bestowal seems to be a type of psycho-magical diplomacy that was deployed to attract recalcitrant military elites with roots in North China, Manchuria, and other parts of Inner Asia.

## Conclusion

Marriages appear to have been the most common form of kinship bonding in interstate relations. Congruence between Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol domestic marriage patterns can help to explain the prevalence of diplomatic marriages in Eastern Eurasia. In both cases status was a more important factor than ethnicity in making matches. The most eminent lineages of northwestern China, including the Sui and Tang houses, sometimes formed nuptial bonds with elite Turko-Mongols. In addition, Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol monarchs kept large harems of concubines and wives to maximize the production of offspring, which in turn facilitated patrimonial politics. Some daughters were exchanged as brides within an endogamous clique of allied lineages, while others were bestowed ad hoc on favored clients. Female offspring of elite families were valuable political assets who retained high status and influence in the husband's household. Ironically, even though China's eminent northeastern lineages refused to intermarry with the Tang, women of the Sui-Tang houses were in high demand as brides in Inner Asia.

Diplomatic courtship in Eastern Eurasia involved shared norms in which the perceived inferior party typically initiated negotiations by requesting a bride from the superior party. This practice partly explains the propensity of Turko-Mongol monarchs to propose marriage alliances with Sui and Tang emperors. Sui to mid-Tang rulers usually played the superior role of bride bestowers because their empires generally were more politically unified and wealthy, and militarily powerful enough to deflect or drive off nomadic attackers.<sup>32</sup> The stronger bargaining position allowed emperors to reserve highly valued daughters and sisters for domestic political marriages and bestow sororal kin on foreign potentates mainly living in the borderlands.<sup>33</sup> During periods of military weakness and civil war, particularly after the An Lushan rebellion, Tang emperors had to make more concessions, such as proposing marriages or bestowing their true offspring. The most significant difference between diplomatic marriages in Sui-Tang China and Turko-Mongol society was the greater importance of prestigious foreign brides in the domestic politics of the latter. Turko-Mongol rulers made far more marriage proposals to Sui-Tang emperors than any other monarchs apparently because they sought high status wives to burnish their reputations. This also helps to explain the one-way traffic in brides from China mainly to Inner Asia.<sup>34</sup>

Negotiations over diplomatic marriages were carried out in a genteel manner that has tended to obscure a mutual calculus of power, prestige, and wealth. The strategic interests and bargaining leverage of particular Sui-Tang emperors generally explain their changing patterns of negotiated matches. Turko-Mongol rulers generally seem to have sought marriages that solidified an external political alliance, carried domestic prestige, and/or delivered at least a modest profit. In some cases, qaghans from more humble backgrounds were willing to pay substantial bride prices to obtain high-status Tang princesses. A Turko-Mongol monarch who

monopolized external marriage and investiture relations with the Sui and Tang made it more difficult for internal rivals to challenge his power.

Fictive kinship appears to have had less importance than diplomatic marriage in medieval Eastern Eurasian interstate relations. Most documented cases of fictive kinship in diplomacy involved Tang imperial surname bestowals to political elites in borderland regions. Although there is no indication that pastoral nomadic rulers actively coveted imperial surnames, after the fall of the Tang some borderland dynasts perpetuated claims of political ancestry to the Li House. Tang imperial practice derived from Western Wei and Northern Zhou precedents, but the ultimate origins of the emphasis on surname bestowal is obscure and may be connected to the propensity of military patrons in North China and perhaps Manchuria to create foster or adoptive relationships with client-warriors. Whatever the reason, from the first years of the dynasty, Tang emperors seem to have been culturally predisposed to grant their surnames to clients, especially in situations involving political uncertainty, as a form of psycho-magical diplomacy.

The changing political and strategic needs of Sui to mid-Tang emperors influenced the varied patterns of marriages and surname bestowals. Sui emperors engaged in diplomatic marriages, but avoided surname bestowals to distinguish themselves from the Northern Zhou. Tang Gaozu, who was in a precarious position during the first few years of the Sui-Tang transition, favored surname bestowals within China and defensive marriage ties to the Türks. Taizong drove hard bargains over marriage alliances and ended up granting more surnames than marriages. Gaozong, who expanded the empire to its first height of military expansion, downplayed marital and fictive kinship. Empress Wu, faced with the challenge of legitimizing a female dynasty, directed most of her energy toward creating fictive kinship bonds at court. She defensively agreed to Qapaghan Qaghan's marriage proposals, but stalled to avoid the weddings. Xuanzong complemented heavy frontier defenses with an expansive diplomacy that included numerous marriages to borderland rulers, and even incestuous matches with Khitan and Qay monarchs whose forebears had accepted the Li surname. The disunity of the post-An Lushan rebellion led to a revival of defensive marital diplomacy with a major Mongolian power, the Uighur Empire. In some cases provincial strongmen in the northeast also received brides or imperial surnames. Previous scholars—who argue that the Sui and Tang rulers agreed to diplomatic marriages when they were militarily weak, or that the nomads were attracted to marital ties because of monetary rewards—have based their conclusions mainly on the better known Tang-Uighur matches of the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Sui to mid-Tang emperors generally held a stronger hand in negotiations, but advantage shifted toward the Uighur after the An Lushan rebellion.

Aside from strategic factors, a dynasty's approach toward patron-client bonding also was influenced by the cultural preferences of the ruling lineage. Kinship in diplomacy demonstrates a great deal of geographic and chronological variation, perhaps because family life is so closely linked to cultural identity. Although some

literati Confucians frowned upon diplomatic marriages, Sui and Tang emperors, who traced their lineages back to the multiethnic Northern Wei garrisons, did not consider matches with Inner Asians to be taboo. Monarchs with cosmopolitan identities, like Sui, Tang, and Turko-Mongol rulers, tend to favor kinship bonding as a strategy of creating cross-cultural alliances (Fewkes 2009, 76–7, 128–9). In post-Tang Eastern Eurasia, the Song Dynasty, favoring Confucian exclusivist mores, rejected diplomatic marriages and only bestowed their surname on neighboring rulers in two cases (Bielenstein 2005, 676). The borderland Xi Xia and Liao, with more cosmopolitan tendencies, engaged in interstate matches. The former also continued to trumpet relations to the Tabgach and Li houses. To the west, medieval Byzantine emperors placed far greater emphasis on heading a fictive “family of kings” than marriage (Althoff 2004, 62–3; Nicol 1988, 57–8). Because of these variations in cultural acceptance of kinship in interstate relations, investiture and appointment remained the universal elements of patron-client bonding in Eurasian diplomacy. Nonetheless, kinship connections generally indicated attempts at forging especially privileged ties within a political family.



## Horse Trading and Other Material Bargains

The idea that Turko-Mongols were obsessed with profit has a hoary legacy. Pre-modern historians of settled societies, including China, typically attributed pastoral nomadic attacks to tribesmen's bestial nature and greed for profit (Sinor 1978; Xiao 1972, 610). While most modern historians now reject the traditional view and its implied racism, a material school of scholars still holds that economic needs of pastoral nomads were decisive in determining war or peace in the *longue durée* of China-Inner Asia relations. Jagchid and Symons (1989, 1–25, 165) argue that the pastoral nomadic subsistence economy depended on grain and cloth from China that could not be produced on the steppe. Raiding resulted when Chinese regimes denied nomadic peoples peaceful trade to obtain agricultural goods. Another line of argument suggests that Turko-Mongol state formation depended on outside sources of goods (Burnham 1979, 357–8). Joseph Fletcher (1979–80, 236–42) believed that Turko-Mongol leaders required plunder gained from constant campaigns to retain loyalty of tribesmen. Fletcher's student, Barfield (1989, 8), points out that tribal leaders had an additional strategy to obtain goods, which was the extortion of indemnities and trading privileges from China or other sedentary polities. The material school generally assumes that there was a strict dichotomy between pastoral nomadic and sedentary societies, and that the former was militarily more powerful than the latter. The martial might of Inner Asians allowed them to tap into Chinese financial resources to create stable regimes.

A frequently cited piece of evidence of the material school is the testimony of the Kül Tegin inscription of 733, which quotes Bilgä Qaghan of the Second Türk Empire:

I came to an amicable agreement with the Tabgach [Tang] people. They (i.e. the [Tang] people) give (us) gold, silver and silk in abundance. The

materials of the Tabgach [Tang] have always been sweet and the materials of the Tabgach [Tang] have always been soft. Deceiving by means of (their) sweet words and soft materials, the Tabgach [Tang] are said to cause remote peoples to come close in this manner. After such a people have settled close to them, (the [Tang]) are said to plan their ill will there . . . Having been taken in by their sweet words and soft materials, you Türk people, were killed in great numbers. . . [I]ll-willed persons made harmful suggestions as follows: "If a people live afar (from them), they (i.e., the [Tang]) give cheap materials (to them); but, if a people live close to them, then (the [Tang]) give them valuable materials" (Tekin 1968, 261–2).<sup>1</sup>

The public inscription asserts that the Türks in Mongolia were recipients of Tang largess and Turkic peoples who submitted to the Tang were treated poorly. Modern scholars frequently have accepted these claims at face value and overlooked Bilgä Qaghan's political motives. If the Tang was enriching Bilgä Qaghan and his tribes in 733, why was he assassinated in the next year and why did the Second Türk Empire disintegrate in a bloody civil war by 742? If all nomads living in the Tang northern borderlands fared poorly, why did tribes like the Qibi and Shatuo remain so long?

Material needs of Turko-Mongols certainly played a role in shaping relations between Sui-Tang Empires and Mongolia-based powers, but this chapter will argue that they were less decisive than the material school assumes. Di Cosmo (1994, 1113–4) has undermined the basic premise of Jagchid's argument by demonstrating that the reliance of nomads on grains and vegetables is variable, but not high, and agriculture in Mongolia was sufficient to meet these needs. The material school also fails to distinguish between Sui-Tang relations with Turkic great powers in Mongolia, and tribes, such as the Shatuo, accepting bridle status. Sui to mid-Tang empire-building succeeded in part because economic incentives in the China-Inner Asia borderlands attracted client tribes away from competing Mongolia-based powers. As a result, Turkic khanates based in Mongolia only achieved long-term success at extorting wealth from China after the An Lushan rebellion.

## I. Pastoral Nomadic Life under Turko-Mongol Rule

Before considering Sui-Tang relations with bridle tribes, it is necessary to understand the economic impact of Turko-Mongol rule over subordinate peoples. Turko-Mongol qaghans enjoyed the customary powers, known from historical and anthropological contexts, to enforce authority and collect taxes (Barfield 1993, 111). Participation in a khanate, whether free or coerced, provided tribespeople

with costs and benefits. The impact of Türk administration on the livelihoods of tribespeople will be compared with Tang bridle rule over pastoral nomads. Due to incompleteness of surviving evidence, only a qualitative analysis is possible.

### A. Administration and Taxation

Türk qaghans exercised loose administrative oversight over their empires by dispatching clients to monitor subordinate tribes and sedentary states. Illig Qaghan's khanate of the 620s will be used as an example because it is relatively well-documented. Illig made his main camp in Inner Mongolia, presumably ruling directly over his inner tribes. To exert authority over the far-flung outer tribes, he invested his sons, nephews, and other clients with the titles of *shad*, *tegin*, and qaghan to rule over various parts of the khanate (Drompp 1991, 101–2). For example, he invested a son and nephew with the titles of *shad* (*she*) and appointed them to co-rule the various Tiele inhabitants of the Mongolian Plateau (JTS 109:3288–9; XTS 83:3644, 110:4114; ZZTJ 192:6044–6; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 174–5). A nephew, Tuli Qaghan, ruled over the Khitan, Qay, and other tribes of Manchuria (JTS 194a:5160; XTS 215a:6038). Similar supervision was arranged for rulers of sedentary people who had accepted Türk suzerainty. For example, in 623 Illig dispatched a nephew, Yushe Shad, and two hundred soldiers to garrison the northern Hedong base of the warlord, Yuan Junzhang (JTS 55:2255; XTS 92:3805; ZZTJ 190:5973; Skaff 2004, 129–31). Illig's subordinate rulers apparently had some leeway to manage local affairs as they saw fit. For example, Tuli Qaghan was unpopular in Manchuria because of high taxes, while Illig's nephew, the *shad* Ashina She'er, allegedly was popular in Mongolia because he did not exact imposts. Nonetheless, when the Manchurian and Mongolian outer tribes revolted in the late 620s, both men fled.<sup>2</sup> In sum, Illig Qaghan's administrative system involved a network of clients with small garrisons who oversaw subordinate outer tribes and sedentary rulers.

Deeper insight into Turkic administration can be gleaned from scattered information on Western Türk rule of oasis states. The *qaghan* invested client kings with the title of *eltäbär* and dispatched Western Türk officials, called *tudun*, to supervise them (JTS 194b:5181, XTS 215b:6056; Beckwith 1987, 79, n. 136; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 24, 52; Golden 1992, 135). Probably the most information about Turkic investiture and oversight exists for the oasis kingdom of Gaochang. The medieval histories mention that when the Tiele controlled Gaochang from around 605 to 620, they stationed an “official” there to collect taxes (BS 97:3216; SS 83:1848; Skaff 1998a, 87). Fragmentary registers of supplies that residents of Gaochang provided to visiting dignitaries, confirm that the Western Türks stationed a *tudun*, his staff, and representatives of “Shuluo Qaghan.” In addition, a “Qaghan” and “Northern Qaghan” sent envoys (60TAM 329:23/1, 23/2 in TCWS 3:342–3, TCWS—plates 1:461; Jiang 1990; Skaff 2002, 366, n. 31). The appearance of two or perhaps three different qaghans with authority over Gaochang brings to mind a

similar organizational structure under later Turko-Mongol polities (Buell 1979, 146–7; Endicott-West 1989, 43–6). The reduplication of authority may have been intended to minimize corruption (Hsiao 1978, 60–2).

As the case of Gaochang alludes, the major responsibility of Türk administrators was overseeing tax collection. Qaghans expected their outer clients to send “tribute” and “good news and blessings” (Tekin 1968, 278). For example, Uighur supervisors in the early ninth century, overseeing the Qay and Khitan, monitored annual dispatches of tribute (ZZTJ 246:7967; Hayashi 2002, 96). Outer tribes paid taxes in livestock and were liable for conscription of men and horses during warfare. Qaghans reportedly kept records of these exactions (ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; TD 197:5404; Klyashtornyi 2004, 38). Sedentary subjects apparently paid imposts in local products. For example, the king-*eltäbär* of Gaochang sent a payment of fruit delicacies and five hundred bolts of silk in two carts to Ton Yabghu Qaghan in 629 (chapter 5). The total tax could be substantial. For example, Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo levied one hundred sixty thousand heads of livestock to send as a betrothal gift to Taizong in 643 (chapter 7). An outer client who refused to pay tribute to his qaghan was effectively declaring independence and an adversarial relationship. When the Basmil “did not send caravans” of tribute in 704, Qapaghan Qaghan sent troops to forcibly subjugate them. Squelching a challenge to authority was more important to Qapaghan than raiding China, which he did not attack in 704 (see chapter 1, Table 1.4). Ultimately, force and the threat of force were keys to holding together the Türk empires.

Although the rates of taxation on Türk outer tribes are unknown, historical and anthropological evidence demonstrates that it probably was light compared to agricultural societies. For example, the Mongol Empire levy on sheep herds was ten percent, but an exemption was granted to households with fewer than one hundred sheep. Anthropologists have noted rates as low as one to three percent. Levies were irregular, potentially skipping a year or occurring several times annually. Qaghans had to limit imposts because their tribespeople’s mobility and military skill provided leeway to seek new masters (Barth 1961, 74; Smith 1970, 60–70). For example, when the Khitan revolted against Tuli Qaghan because of his heavy taxes, they submitted to the Tang in 628 (chapter 9, note 1). Despite the generally light oversight and taxation of the Türk administrative system, perceptions of whether imposts were light or heavy had a powerful impact on political allegiances.

## B. Economic Opportunities

To offset the costs associated with participation in a khanate, the qaghan also had to provide for the economic well being of his subjects. The qaghan, like any patrimonial ruler, was expected to bestow generous gifts on his clients (chapter 3), but even more significant was his prerogative to allocate pasture (Smith 1978, 63). Lack of good grasslands could trigger nomads to migrate in search of better opportunities.

For example, in the early seventh century the Qibi tribe departed Koko-nor because their lands were “too cramped” and had “unhealthy miasmas.” They migrated to the northwest and submitted to the Western Türks (JTS 109:3291; XTS 110:4117; ZZTJ 194:6099). One of the most crucial obligations of the qaghan was to defend pastures of his followers and expand into the territory of rivals.

Military leadership probably was the most important prerogative of Turko-Mongol rulers. Warfare’s purpose transcended strategic concerns because victory could yield profits for an entire contingent of warriors. All adult males were expected to serve as self-equipped and unpaid cavalry soldiers who would be rewarded with a share of the spoils (Findley 2005, 45; Sinor 1981, 134–5; Smith 1978, 63). Türk warriors, whether attacking fellow pastoral nomads or sedentary farmers, tended to seize women, children, and livestock.<sup>3</sup> When opportunities arose, the Türks took other goods. For example, Qapaghan Qaghan’s incursion into Sogdia yielded booty of gold and silver along with girls, women and camels (Tekin 1968, 289). The Türks seized animals most frequently not only because livestock were the basis of their economy, but also because their cavalry armies lacked siege engines to capture walled cities (ZZTJ 206:6535; Golden 2002, 135, 151). The fate of enslaved women and children generally is unknown, but they appear to have been integrated into Turko-Mongol society or sold for profit. According to the most plausible explanation, poor herders, who could not afford the bride price, obtained wives, while tribal elites expanded their harems and acquired domestic servants (Golden 2001, 31). The best documented cases of sales involved Turkic boys who became slave soldiers in the Islamic Middle East beginning in the ninth century (Matthew Gordon 2001, 21–5). The plunder derived from raiding supplemented the Turko-Mongol pastoral economy and may have been the common tribesman’s primary opportunity for enrichment and marriage.<sup>4</sup>

The ability of Turko-Mongol rulers to mobilize troops varied chronologically and geographically in the seventh and eighth centuries. As discussed in chapter 1, more than half of attacks on China in the period 599 to 755 came in bursts during the reigns of Illig Qaghan (621–626), Ilterish Qaghan (682–687), and Qapaghan Qaghan (694–714). Presumably these were the most prosperous years for the common tribespeople of the Türk khanates. Even though Bilgä Qaghan only raided the Tang once, in the boastful rhetoric of the Orkhon inscriptions he claims that his campaigns, “furnished the naked people with clothes and. . .made the poor people rich and the few people numerous” (Tekin 1968, 268). If Bilgä’s inner Türk tribes were prospering, it was mainly at the expense of his outer tribes, which he raided almost annually from 716 to 724 (see chapter 1, Table 1.4).

In addition to plunder, Turkic military forces in the western steppe took other forms of payment when opportunities arose. In some cases Turkic leaders paid salaries, such as Bagha Tarqan of the Türgish who controlled sedentary lands in Sogdia.<sup>5</sup> Also in Sogdia, at least one local ruler hired Turkic and Sogdian forces with payments of rubies and food supplies (La Vaissière 2007, 99–101). Sometimes Turko-Mongol leaders rendered mercenary services to other rulers. For example, in 567 the Avar

qaghan agreed to aid the Lombards against the Gepids in exchange for one tenth of Lombard livestock, and assuming success in battle, half of the booty and all of the Gepid land (Blockley 1985, 131). These examples demonstrate that Turko-Mongol tribes and warriors flexibly accepted various forms of payment.

Indemnities, compensation paid to the victor in war as a condition of peace, were common among Turko-Mongols and other Eurasian peoples from ancient times until World War I. Although indemnities were a favored means of Turko-Mongol leaders to extract wealth from agricultural societies, scholars often overlook that sedentary empires shared the practice. For example, when Sasanian Iran was victorious over the Byzantine Empire, the former demanded an indemnity “as a condition for laying down their arms.” In their fifty-year treaty of 561, the Byzantines agreed to make annual payments to the Sasanians of thirty thousand gold coins (135 kg). Turko-Mongols of West Asia also sought indemnities. After the Byzantine-Sasanian wars renewed in the 570s, the Byzantines, needing to secure peace on their northern flank, began to pay annual indemnities of eighty thousand gold coins (360 kg) to the Avars (Blockley 1985, 61–3, 241; Szádeczky-Kardoss 1990, 208–9).<sup>6</sup> The indemnity allowed a qaghan to extract wealth without having to go to the expense of plundering or setting up an administrative system.

Tang emperors rarely paid undisguised indemnities to buy peace from Turko-Mongol powers. First Gaozu in 622 and then Taizong in 626 delivered unknown quantities of wealth to Illig Qaghan of the Türks in exchange for withdrawal of his forces (chapter 6; Graff 2002b, 37–8; Li 1965, 262–3; Wu 1998, 158–9). Taizong called his covenant with Illig Qaghan in 626 the “Shame on the Wei River,” which may explain why Tang court historians suppressed the amounts of compensation. Besides these two cases, there is no evidence that Sui and Tang rulers paid major indemnities to steppe rulers.<sup>7</sup> Tang emperors seem to have regarded direct indemnity payments as dishonorable and preferred to pay compensation in disguised forms.

One means of concealing an indemnity was to send a dowry or funerary present. The value of Sui-Tang dowries and gifts to Turko-Mongols tended to vary according to the balance of power. As chapter 7 demonstrates, Tang dowries that accompanied brides only reached substantial levels after the An Lushan rebellion. Information on condolence gifts, which is rare, hints at a similar pattern. In 587, when the Sui was stronger than the internally divided Türks, Sui Wendi sent five thousand bolts of silk after the death of Ishbara Qaghan. By 619, when China was embroiled in civil war, Tang Gaozu dispatched thirty thousand bolts of silk to offer condolences after Shibi Qaghan passed away, six times more than the Sui in 587 (SS 84:1870; JTS 194a:5154; XTS 215a:6028; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 123). The only other prominent mention of funerary gifts occurred after the deaths of Kül Tegin and Bilgä Qaghan in the 730s. In both cases, Xuanzong dispatched envoys to offer condolences and artisans to erect memorials commemorating the lives of the Türk leaders (JTS 194a:5176; XTS 215b:6056; ZZTJ 214:6809; CFYG 999:18b; QJJ 11:4a–b;



Pelliot 1929, 234–48; Tekin 1968, 263, 279). Though symbolically significant, Xuanzong's actions were financially inconsequential during a period of military truce that involved a horse-silk trade agreement, to be discussed below.

Sui to mid-Tang rulers spent much less on indemnity payments than the preceding Han and succeeding Song dynasties. For example, the Han made payments to the Xiongnu, Sārbi, and Wusun between 50 and 100 CE annually totaling over 445,000 strings of bronze coins (Yü 1967, 36–64). The Song, which is better documented than earlier dynasties, paid regular indemnities of varying amounts to the borderland empires on their northern frontier. For example, by 1044 the Northern Song had made separate agreements with the Liao and Xi Xia dynasties totaling 755,000 units of silk, silver, and tea annually (Dunnell 1994, 188–9; Franke 1994, 233–5; Twitchett and Tietze 1994, 109–10, 122). In relative terms, this was a minor Song outlay, being less than 1 percent of a budget of over 100 million bronze coin-grain-silk-silver units (Wang 1995, 189, 395–6, 771–5).<sup>8</sup> Still, this was a regular expense that Sui and Tang rulers avoided until the Tang began to pay disguised indemnities after the An Lushan rebellion.

What were the cumulative costs and benefits of life under the rule of the medieval Turkic khanates? A hint comes from the archaeological record of medieval Mongolia. Turkic burials reveal an uneven distribution of wealth. The tribal aristocracy had sumptuous graves and warriors were interred in full armor with saddled horses. Many more were buried without any goods (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 337–8). The graves without possessions perhaps contained poor commoners or slaves. The relatively unfavorable economic position of poor herders and the above-mentioned taxation of outer tribes partly explains why some Turko-Mongols were tempted to try their luck as subjects of the Sui and Tang empires.

## II. Pastoral Nomadic Life under Sui-Tang Rule

Most information on Turko-Mongols living under Sui-Tang jurisdiction derives from scattered evidence about Tang bridle rule. Below we will investigate the administrative and financial impact on tribes accepting Tang authority. Despite the veneer of legal-bureaucratic nomenclature—derived from local civil and military administration of agricultural society—bridle rule generally seems to have accommodated Turko-Mongol norms.

### A. Administration and Taxation

Tang bridle administration originated in 629 as an ad hoc response to a typical phenomenon of the Turko-Mongol world. As the First Türk Empire crumbled, various tribal leaders and their adherents revolted against Illig Qaghan and fled to the Tang (chapter 9). In contrast to the Sui policy of investing Turko-Mongol elites with



native titles, Tang frontier officials began to organize the surrendered pastoral nomads into “prefectures,” using the nomenclature of local administration (Wu 1998, 198). The ad hoc measures of 629 were elaborated and formalized in 630 after the Tang conquest of Illig Qaghan and court debate on the disposition of the Türks (chapter 2). Eventually, six prefectures under the jurisdiction of four area commands (*dudu fu*) were established in the grasslands around Xiazhou in the southern Ordos (Iwami 1998, 109–23; Pan 1992a, 64–9; Wu 1998, 185–206; Zhao 1993). Taizong appointed trusted tribal leaders as commanders-in-chief to head each prefecture and area command, including his blood brother Tuli Qaghan, who served as commander-in-chief of his tribal adherents (JTS 194a:5160–1; XTS 215a:6038; ZZTJ 193:6077). Taizong’s innovative use of bureaucratic terminology to designate pastoral nomadic outer clients merely created a new guise for customary patrimonial patron-client relationships. For example, the inheritability of bridle positions, discussed in chapter 6, demonstrates that bridle officials were not subject to the same regulations as the regular bureaucracy.

As the bridle system matured, protectorates (*duhu fu*), which administered larger and more remote bridle tribes and tribal unions, were established in major frontier garrison. The military commander of the regular Tang troops in the garrison generally had concurrent duties as protector-general (*duhu*) administering the tribes. For example, the “Three Clans” of Qarluq, Huluwu, and Shunishi broke with Qapaghan Qaghan and rendered allegiance to the Tang in 714 under the jurisdiction of the Beiting Protectorate (see chapter 1, Map 1.4). At the time Guo Qianguan (d. 717) served concurrently as Beiting Protector-General and Hanhai Army Military Commissioner.<sup>9</sup> The former title indicates that he oversaw the bridle tribes in the region, while the latter designates his role as commander of Beiting’s garrison, called the Hanhai Army (ZZTJ 215:6848; JTS 38:1385–6; XTS 40:1046; TD 172:4479). To prepare for incorporation into the Tang Empire, Xuanzong ordered the Qarluq to gather in the Altai Mountains for immediate inspection (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). Guo Qianguan was one of two commanders whom the emperor ordered to “pacify” the tribes and search for plunderers (ZZTJ 211:6706; XTS 215a:6048).<sup>10</sup> Bridle tribes also might receive visits from censors, an ancient office of imperial Chinese civil bureaucracy, responsible for investigating malfeasance in the government, including the frontier military (Graff 2002a, 216). For example in 716 Xuanzong dispatched a censor to northern Guannei who acted as “special commissioner to investigate the frontier” (JTS 103:3189–90; XTS 133:4544; ZZTJ 207:6721–2).

Channels of communication and taxation also were created. When the Tiele tribal union submitted in 646, they agreed to pay an annual tribute of sable skins (JTS 195:5196; XTS 217a:6112–3; ZZTJ 198:6242–3). To handle their correspondence, Taizong dispatched scribes to Mongolia. To facilitate contacts, the transportation infrastructure of the Tang Empire was extended northward along the main route to Mongolia, with sixty relay stations providing horses and food for envoys and couriers. Other efforts to establish communications systems are evident

for the Western Türks around 660 and for the Qarluq in 754.<sup>11</sup> The scribes and other officials living among the bridle tribes were supposed to be supplied by the natives rather than by the central government (JTS 43:1839; XTS 55:1396). This may have been the main tax burden placed upon bridle tribes with protectorate status, but was in keeping with Turko-Mongol customary practice because it resembles the above-mentioned supply system that existed for Western Türk officials stationed at the Gaochang Kingdom.

The degree of authority that protectorates could exercise over distant bridle tribes can be judged from one of the most important cases in Tang history, the Tiele tribal union of Mongolia in the mid-seventh century. After the grand gathering in 646 where Taizong was reproclaimed Heavenly Qaghan (chapter 4), the emperor divided the Tiele into six area commands and seven prefectures under administrative control of the Yanran Protectorate, based near the site of the eighth-century Tang garrison at Xishouxiang (see chapter 1, Map 1.4). Yanran guarded the strategically important route from the great loop of the Yellow River to Mongolia.<sup>12</sup> Despite its distance from Mongolia, Yanran Protectorate became deeply involved in political and military affairs of the Tiele. When Tumidu, leader of the Uighur, was assassinated in 648, the Yanran Vice Protector-General was responsible for killing the assassin and placing Tumidu's son, Porun, in power (chapter 6). During Su Dingfang's campaign that conquered the Western Türks in 657, the Yanran Protector-General and Vice Protector-General commanded Porun and his Uighur troops (JTS 83:2778, 195:5197; XTS 111:4137; ZZTJ 200:6301). As on the steppe, the cavalry of the bridle tribes retained indigenous leadership and organization, and were responsible for providing their own horses, supplies, and equipment (Sun 1995, 112–5). This case of the Tiele demonstrates that regular Tang military officers of the protectorates exercised authority over client chiefs, but only seem to have interfered in internal tribal affairs at crucial junctures, such as succession.

In a different type of case, smaller bridle tribes, living on grasslands in closer proximity to major garrisons, fell under jurisdiction of prefectural area commands, which had more authority over their domestic affairs. In most cases native leaders retained traditional powers, but sometimes regular Tang officials directly administered tribes. Lingzhou in western Guannei is an example of a prefectural area command. As in the case of protectorates, it was located in a borderland prefectural seat where a major garrison, the Shuofang Army, also was headquartered (see chapter 1, Map 1.4). It oversaw tribes identified as Tiele, Toghuz-Oghuz, and Uighur, whose indigenous chiefs presumably received appointments as prefects (JTS 38:1416–7; XTS 43b:1121). Lingzhou also had authority over the so-called “Six Barbarian (Hu) Prefectures” organized in 679 for “surrendered Türks” with court-appointed “Tang people” serving as prefects (chapter 2). The exact locations of these bridle prefectures are unknown with the exception of Luzhou, which was situated in a semi-arid region about 125 kilometers southeast of Lingzhou near the intersection of the modern borders of Ningxia, Shaanxi, and Inner Mongolia (Ningxia 1988).

Several thousand families of Türks inhabited the Six Barbarian Prefectures until 697, when Empress Wu sent them to Qapaghan Qaghan to compensate him for his attack on the Khitan (chapter 1). Thereafter, Tangut became the predominant pastoralists in the region.<sup>13</sup> Presumably Tangut chiefs once again served as hereditary prefects.

In addition to the occasional appointment of regular Tang prefects to directly supervise bridle tribes, compilation of census data is another sign that more intense administrative oversight occurred in prefectural area commands. A set of eighth-century bridle district household and population counts, preserved in the *Old Tang history*, indicate that the total registered population of Turko-Mongols along the Tang northern frontier was 15,290 households and 59,136 people (Table 8.1).<sup>14</sup> This may be the world's earliest census of pastoral nomads. These Turko-Mongols most likely were being taxed because Tang administrators only conducted censuses for purposes of taxation.

Another sign that Turko-Mongol bridle tribes were taxed was the existence of a Tang tax statute suited to the China-Inner Asia borderlands. It stipulated that "surrendered barbarians" were to be registered on tax rolls and classified on the basis of wealth as superior, middle, and inferior households. The tax rate for the first two years was ten silver coins for the superior grade, five silver coins for the middle grade, and full exemption for the inferior grade. In the third year an additional obligation was incurred of two sheep for the superior grade, one sheep for the middle grade, and one sheep for every three inferior households. An appended commentary notes that the sheep tax was to be canceled for those who supplied saddle horses over thirty days per year on military campaigns (JTS 48:2088; CFYG

**Table 8.1. Pastoral Nomadic Bridle District Census Data, ca. 742**

<i>Prefectural area command</i>	<i>Inhabitants</i>	<i>Number of bridle districts</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Average Household Size</i>
Youzhou-Yíngzhou	Khitan, Qay, Türks	11	4,505	17,890	3.97
Xiazhou	Tangut, Yantuo	8	3,422	14,320	4.18
Lingzhou	Toghuz-Oghuz	6	2,315	9,714	4.20
Liangzhou	Tu[yu]hun, Qibi, Sijie, Hun, Xingxi	8	5,048	17,212	3.41
TOTALS		33	15,290	59,136	3.87

487:16b; TLD 3:36b–37a; WXTK 2:41c; Niida 1933, 671–2 art. 6; Twitchett 1970, 142). The tax doubtlessly was targeted at Turko-Mongols who raised sheep and horses, and perhaps Sogdian merchants and others with access to Middle Eastern silver coins (Skaff 1998a; Thierry 1993).<sup>15</sup> The Tang's sheep tax was in keeping with Turko-Mongol customary practice and extremely light compared to farmers in the empire. Based on a minimum herd size of sixty sheep needed to sustain a poor pastoral nomadic family, a tax of one sheep every three years is an annual rate of 0.55 percent.<sup>16</sup> This is lower than the above-mentioned Turko-Mongol rates, and slightly more than the tax exemption that the Mongols granted to poor nomads. Furthermore, the Tang sheep levy was far lighter than taxes on farming households. The contemporary value of a sheep was approximately 400 bronze coins.<sup>17</sup> This made the annualized tax on a poor nomadic household about 133 coins, far less than the estimated burden of 2,000 coins per annum on the typical Tang farmer (Twitchett 1970, 234, n. 131). The Tang tax system accommodated the customary norms of Turko-Mongol subjects, presumably to encourage their incorporation into the empire.

The Tang local governments in at least one instance placed an additional burden of *corvée*—unpaid labor—on bridle tribes. Although *corvée* is only mentioned in extant Tang tax statutes regarding “southwestern barbarians” (chapter 2), an excavated document proves that the Xizhou Prefectural Area Command (Turfan) obtained unpaid laborers from Turko-Mongol bridle tribes in 734. At the time, 1,450 *corvée* laborers (*fu*) were needed to maintain three major irrigation canal embankments. Because of a shortage of adult male farmers who owed labor service to the government, local officials were dragooning normally exempt Tang subjects, including households of barbarians, private manors, shopkeepers, and personnel working on state ranches (73TAM509:23/1(a), 23/1–2(a), 23/1–3(a) in TCWS 9:107–9; TCWS—plates 4: 317–8). Tang area command officials also negotiated with a “patrol chief” of an unknown Turkic tribe. The tribal envoy won a major concession of food supplies for the Turkic laborers even though Tang *corvée* workers normally provided their own provisions (73TAM509:23/2–1 in TCWS 9:104–5; TCWS—plates 4:315; Sun 1983, 534–7).<sup>18</sup> Tang local officials evidently had negotiated a mutual agreement with bridle tribe elites in which both sides made concessions.

Tang frontier military officers and bridle elites sometimes formed strong relationships in which they developed sophisticated knowledge of each other's political affairs. For example, the Anxi Protector-general, Guo Yuanzhen, having formed tight personal connections with the Türgish rulers in the early eighth century, had a keen understanding of Turkic culture. Moreover, Saqal and a rival for tribal leadership became cunning participants in politics of the Tang court and frontier military (Skaff 2009a). The formal Tang institutions linking bridle tribes to the Tang realm inevitably became intertwined with personal relationships endemic to Chinese and Turko-Mongol patrimonial politics. Overall, the Tang apparently administered

Turko-Mongol bridle subjects according to customary steppe norms, which involved terms more favorable than those of the farming populace of the empire.

## B. Economic Opportunities

The rhetoric of the Orkhon inscriptions has created a misimpression that life for the Türks under Tang bridle rule in the seventh century was unprofitable.

For the benefit of the Tabgach [Tang] they went on campaigns up to (the land of) Bülki qaghan in the east . . . and as far as the Iron Gate in the west. For the benefit of the Tabgach [Tang] they conquered countries. Then, the Türk common people said as follows: “We used to be a people who had an [independent] state . . . For whose benefit are we conquering these lands?” (Tekin 1968, 264–5).

While the Tang court was the greatest beneficiary of the seventh-century conquests, it was disingenuous to claim that Türk officers and cavalrymen did not receive economic rewards for their military service. Below we will explore economic opportunities available to Turko-Mongols living under Sui-Tang authority and find that pastoral nomadic subjects could obtain customary levels of subsistence and profit in the China-Inner Asia borderlands.

Newly submitted tribes were given assistance—including food, valuables, and military aid—to encourage fidelity and ease hardships. For example, when Ishbara Qaghan of the Türks received safe haven in the Ordos in 585, Sui Wendi supplied his adherents with food and clothing (SS 84:1869; ZZTJ 176:5482). In the early Tang, Turkic tribes—who had surrendered in the vicinity of Yizhou (Hami) after the defeat of the First Türk Empire in 630—received grain shipped from the Gansu corridor. At the same time to the east in the Ordos region, each tribesman was given a caftan and five bolts of silk (JTS 62:2388–9; XTS 99:3911–2; ZGZY 9:326; Pan 1997, 193). The best documented case involved twenty thousand tents of Huluwu submitting at Tingzhou in late 714, when many outer tribes were revolting against Qapaghan Qaghan. An imperial decree ordered the local military commander to treat the tribespeople with benevolence. The emperor dispatched an envoy to Beiting to reward the Huluwu with more than two hundred purple silk caftans, gold and silver belts, and twenty thousand bolts of polychrome silk (ZZTJ 211:6706; CFYG 974:14b, 977:19b–20a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 29, 31). While the caftans and belts symbolized the incorporation of the tribal elite into the Tang Empire, the quantity of textiles potentially was sufficient to reward each family (tent) with one bolt of silk. When a delegation of Huluwu tribal elites went to court in 715, the emperor personally feted the dignitaries at a banquet, and bestowed numerous valuables (CFYG 974:15a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 31). When Qapaghan Qaghan attacked the Huluwu and other bridle tribes in May 715, the Tang court dispatched

reinforcements (XTS 215b:6048, 6065; ZZTJ 211:6709–10). Xuanzong's goal, like that of his predecessors, was to bestow material rewards and assistance to attract the Hulusu away from the Türks.

Emergency aid and protection could win the loyalty of newly submitted tribes in the short term, but grass was one requirement to retain long-term allegiance of pastoral nomads. While some impoverished Turko-Mongols sedentarized, most appear to have continued practicing pastoral nomadism.<sup>19</sup> For example, in 663 the Tuyuhun qaghan, Nuohebo, and his adherents lost a factional struggle and fled from their homeland around Koko-nor Lake to Shanzhou, the adjacent Tang district to the east near modern Xining, Qinghai. Shanzhou proved to be unsatisfactory because the allotted territory lacked sufficient grassland for their flocks and was vulnerable to Tibetan raids. As a result, in 672 the Tuyuhun were moved four hundred kilometers east to new lands with better pasture south of Lingzhou in modern Ningxia (ZZTJ 201:6368). In this case, Tang Gaozong was exercising the customary right of a qaghan to allocate rangelands of subordinate tribes. Overall the China-Inner Asia borderlands apparently supported fewer Turko-Mongol pastoralists than the Mongolian plateau, which has almost twice as much natural pasture as modern Inner Mongolia, Gansu, and Ningxia combined.<sup>20</sup> Population data provided in chapter 1 roughly bears this out. The Türk bridle tribes in Inner Mongolia had forty thousand warriors in 641, while the Sir-Yantuo in Mongolia could mobilize five times as many men. Consequently, grass supply was one area where Mongolia-based khanates had an economic advantage over China-based empires.

Turko-Mongols who were in military service in Sui-Tang armies as regular troops or tribally organized auxiliaries received additional economic opportunities. Remuneration through plunder, subventions, salaries, and rewards for meritorious service supplemented the pastoral subsistence economy. Even though the Confucian value system discouraged looting, Sui-Tang emperors took a pragmatic attitude toward paying regular or auxiliary troops with the spoils of war. On the one hand, rewarding soldiers with plunder was tempting because it put less strain on governmental coffers. On the other hand, troops involved in pillage could become tactical and political liabilities. Tactically, soldiers intent on personal profit became susceptible to ambush, which led the influential Tang general, Li Jing, to discourage plunder (Graff 2002a, 194). Politically, looting damaged the cause of imperial expansion by harming the tax base and alienating conquered peoples.

Conflicting priorities were on display when Taizong personally participated in his expedition against Koguryō in 645. Out of anger, the emperor originally promised to allow his regular troops and Turko-Mongol cavalry to pillage a city that was stubbornly resisting, but reneged after its capture. His general, Li Shiji, who was commanding regular troops and “submitted barbarians,” did not distinguish between the two types of forces under his command when he complained “soldiers strive to fight forward, braving arrows and stones, only out of lust for plunder.” Li Shiji's understanding of the sentiments of common soldiers derived from his



long military career in warlord and Tang armies.<sup>21</sup> Taizong, himself an experienced military commander, agreed with his general, but declined to allow looting because, in proper Confucian fashion, he claimed to pity the inhabitants. To placate the disappointed troops, Taizong rewarded meritorious warriors out of his personal treasury (JTS 199a:5324; ZZTJ 197:6214, 198:6222). It is hard to believe that Taizong's decision was motivated solely by compassion for civilians—given his earlier promise to allow looting and general amoral and manipulative approach to power and politics. Most likely, he was interested in preserving the city as a productive tax base. In other instances, the Sui and Tang courts sometimes condoned pillage when commanders allowed looting either to reward troops or obtain personal profit. For example, when Li Jing's armies defeated the Türks in 630, he permitted his troops to plunder the vanquished enemy. Although Taizong and literati Confucian officials at court later upbraided him, Li Jing did not suffer punishment (Graff 1995, 500–1, 2002a, 188). Taizong's stern reprimand pandered to Confucian sentiment, but the lack of punishment tacitly sanctioned his general's actions. In cases involving warfare in Inner Asia, emperors generally turned a blind eye toward victorious commanders who allowed looting.<sup>22</sup> The value of a military triumph outweighed any breach of propriety. Emperors rebuked or punished commanders of unsuccessful campaigns who allowed plunder, but the military failure seems to have been considered the main offense.<sup>23</sup>

These practical attitudes toward pillage explain the willingness of Sui-Tang emperors to offer spoils of war to Turko-Mongols who participated in military expeditions. A letter that Xuanzong sent around 735 attempted to persuade the Türks to join Tang troops in attacking the Türgish. Xuanzong promised the Türks all Türgish livestock, land, children, and valuables.<sup>24</sup> Sui Wendi and Ishbara Qaghan seem to have struck a similar deal before their joint expedition against the Abo (Avar?) tribe in 585 in which the Türk armies kept all spoils (SS 84:1869; ZZTJ 176:5482–3; Pan 1997, 103–4). In times of civil war and weak finances, some Tang rulers even were willing to offer plunder to entice Turkic rulers to join in domestic campaigns. Gaozu made a pact with Shibi Qaghan in 617 to supply cavalry for the conquest of Chang'an with Shibi receiving the valuables and Gaozu the land and people (chapter 6). Suzong sealed a similar pact to obtain Uighur participation in operations against rebel-held Chang'an and Luoyang in 757, but the Uighur also were entitled to children! (JTS 195:5199; XTS 217a:6116, 6123; ZZTJ 220:7034–5, 7041; Mackerras 1973, 97). Confucian historians pilloried the Uighur for their rapacity, but these Tang emperors deserve greater excoriation for sacrificing their own cities and children for power.

Besides the opportunity for pillage, Sui and Tang emperors offered other financial inducements to Turko-Mongol elites and commoners to participate in military campaigns or serve in the frontier military. Tribal leaders with Tang civil, military, and noble titles were entitled to salaries and grain from official fields. Although some scholars call these appointments “purely nominal” (Bielenstein 2005, 7), the



stipulated payments can be proven in some cases. When Xuanzong invested the Türgish chief, Sulu, with the noble title of duke (*gong*) in 718, the investiture edict mentioned an appanage of three thousand households (CFYG 964:14a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 36). It seems likely that Sulu received the income because three thousand households was the number allotted to a duke in Tang law (XTS 46:1188; Niida 1933, 3189, art. 6; Rotours 1974, 43–4). In another case, an edict of 754 mentions that a Qarluq bridle chief who formerly had traveled to Chang'an to collect his "official salary" would be permitted to receive his pay at Beiting, the headquarters of the protectorate with jurisdiction over him (CFYG 975:23a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 90–1). Salaries and appanages of this sort would have enriched individual members of the elite without benefitting common tribespeople.

Leaders of less prominent bridle tribes also appear to have received salaries or gifts in exchange for their military service. The clearest indication is an edict issued in 716 after the submission of Toghuz-Oghuz tribes in northern Hedong. Xuanzong appointed five "chiefs" to serve as "attack commissioners" and bestowed one hundred bolts of silk on each. They were "discharged to make a tribal living" in the surrounding grasslands, but in the event of war were responsible for mobilizing their total 8,800 cavalry to aid the 30,000 regular garrison soldiers in the region (TZLJB 25:1218; Sun 1995, 114; Zhang 1994, 97–8). Another common practice was to reward bridle chiefs, along with regular Tang generals, who participated in victorious military expeditions. For example, this occurred after the successful campaign against the Tuyuhun in 635 (ZZTJ 194:6115). In this limited number of cases where the values of salaries and rewards are known, the quantities appear to be sufficient to enrich the chiefs, but not substantial enough to reward common cavalymen.

Common tribesmen living under Tang bridle rule appear to have received modest remuneration for military service. Although emperors normally issued rewards directly to tribal leaders, in one case Xuanzong stipulated that a total of 20,000 bolts of silk be distributed to Qay "cavalry scout troops and commoners" who had served on a victorious Tang expedition in 724 (CFYG 975:3b, 979:6b–7a; TZLJB 33:1483). A more typical attraction for common soldiers probably was access to plunder in warfare, discussed above. An additional benefit was remission of the sheep tax for tribesmen who supplied their own mounts over one month per year, also previously noted. Aside from the self-supplied horse, the issue of provisions is a murky one. In some cases, tribal auxiliaries provided their own food, but in other instances Tang garrisons furnished them with grain or livestock.<sup>25</sup> This variability of supply methods parallels the situation in the Tang interior (Graff 2002a, 189; Zhang 1994, 39–44).

By the eighth century, frontier garrisons included "foreign and Han professional soldiers" (*fan-han jian'er*). For example, an edict of 735 permitted a commander to recruit this type of soldier on the northwestern frontier (QJW 286:4b; QJJ 10:11a). A few years later an imperial edict promised professional soldiers annual "gifts,"

perpetual tax exemption, and land and dwellings for their families (TLD 5:18b–19a; CFYG 124:21a–b; Zhang 1994, 55–9). Annual payments and other benefits must have played a part in attracting Turko-Mongol personnel to the eighth-century frontier armies. For example, more than 5,000 bridle tribe families living around Liangzhou in Hexi supplied cavalymen serving full-time in the local Chishui Army in the mid-eighth century (Table 8.1; JTS 103:3191–2, 195:5198; XTS 133:4547–8, 217a:6114; ZZTJ 213:6779–80). Chishui was the largest frontier garrison in the empire with 33,000 troops and 13,000 horses in the mid-eighth century, defending against Tibet in the west and the Türks in the north (JTS 38:1386; TD 172:4480–1; ZZTJ 215:6848; YHJX 40:1018; XTS 40:1044). The Liangzhou bridle tribes conceivably supplied more than one-third of Chishui's cavalry forces.<sup>26</sup>

Records of direct remuneration to entire Turko-Mongol tribal groups for military service are relatively rare, but the few known cases involve those dwelling in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. During the Sui, 3,500 chieftains serving under Qimin Qaghan in Inner Mongolia received a total of 200,000 bolts of silk distributed according to rank (average of 57.1 bolts each) (chapter 5; SS 84:1875; CFYG 974:8b). Apparently, the large payment was meant to cement their loyalty and assure that they would continue to provide frontier defense against the First Türk Empire. The only known large-scale Tang subsidies were delivered to the Khitan and Qay between 720 and 732, evidently in exchange for attacks on the Second Türk Empire. The first and largest occurred in February 720, when the Khitan sent an embassy of 354 men to the capital. Along with caftans and belts, each envoy received 2,000 bolts of silk for a total of 710,000 bolts (CFYG 974:20b). Apparently this was a prepayment for a failed attack on the Türks in late 720.<sup>27</sup> The second largest involved 200,000 bolts of silk delivered to the Qay at the frontier in July 732, evidently as a prepayment for an unsuccessful Tang-Qay campaign against an alliance of the Khitan and Türks in the spring of 733 (Tekin 1968, 279; JTS 103:3190, 199b:5352–3, 5356; XTS 219:6170–2, 6175; ZZTJ 213: 6798, 6801–2). Two other major transfers of silk—50,000 bolts of silk to eight Khitan tribes in 722 and 30,000 bolts to five Qay tribes in 723—can be connected to defensive operations against Türk invasions.<sup>28</sup> These large subsidies served a strategic purpose of compensating Turko-Mongols based in the China-Inner Asia borderlands for their military services against the Türk khanates of Mongolia.

The only case that deviates from this pattern occurred when Empress Wu recruited Qapaghan Qaghan to attack the Khitan in 697. This is the sole instance during the Sui or Tang of the strategic blunder of recruiting a great power in Mongolia to attack an intermediate power in the borderlands (chapter 1). The case also is exceptional because Qapaghan Qaghan showed interest in other forms of payment besides valuables. He demanded millet seeds, iron, farming tools, and the Turkic bridle tribes of the southern Ordos. After some hesitation Empress Wu met these demands and also delivered unknown quantities of silks and wares made from gold and silver, which he later complained were of inferior quality. Qapaghan

honored his end of the bargain by conquering the Khitan, but then used his complaints to justify attacking Hebei (chapter 1; JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045–6; ZZTJ 206:6516, 6530–1; Pulleyblank 1952, 329–30). The case demonstrates Qapaghan Qaghan's interest in extracting goods from the empress that could generate wealth through expansion of the agricultural base of his empire.

### C. Mutual Benefits

Sui and Tang frontier policies—which gave Turko-Mongol tribes and individuals economic incentives to live on the northern fringes of the empires and serve in the military—also benefitted imperial finances. Tribes living in the borderlands gave the Sui and Tang access to highly skilled cavalry soldiers equipped with their own horses. It has long been recognized that these cavalry were instrumental in the Tang's expansion into Inner Asia (Chen 1972–3b). What has been overlooked is the contribution of these forces to holding down military costs. Since Turko-Mongol cavalry were only mobilized for the duration of a campaign, the Sui-Tang governments avoided expenses of training, equipping, feeding, and housing these troops. When not involved in military operations, men of these bridle tribes were free to raise livestock, which in turn increased the supply of cavalry mounts and pack horses available to Sui-Tang armies.

The advantage of tribal auxiliaries is apparent when comparing mid-Tang and Northern Song military spending. Tang military costs were lower than the Northern Song's in real and proportional terms. Tang revenue during the Tianbao reign period (742–56) was an annual average of 57,000,000 cloth-grain-coin accounting units. Military expenditures were 12,900,000 cloth-grain-coin units, or around one-fourth of the Tianbao average revenue, to support 490,000 professional frontier troops.<sup>29</sup> Reportedly, this was the high point of Tang military spending (TD 6:110–1; Twitchett 1970, 153–6). The Song devoted a much greater proportion of its revenue to the military, approximately one half, because the size of the standing army was more than double that of the mid-Tang.<sup>30</sup> A key factor holding down Tang military spending was the practice of hiring Turko-Mongol cavalry temporarily. The largest known outlays to purchase the services of auxiliaries were to the Khitan and Qay in the early eighth century, mentioned above. In terms of annual cost per soldier, Table 8.2<sup>31</sup> demonstrates that temporarily hiring high-quality Khitan (16.5 bolts/soldier) and Qay (6.7 bolts/soldier) mounted archers for offensive campaigns or rewarding them for serving as buffers by defending their own territory (about 1 bolt/soldier) was far cheaper than the annual per capita cost of Tang standing army soldiers (26.3 cloth-grain units/soldier).<sup>32</sup> Turko-Mongol auxiliaries receiving direct payments probably viewed service to the Tang to be potentially lucrative because they also might expect to obtain plunder. Though this extant financial data is limited, it suggests that the Sui-Tang approach to frontier defense provided higher quality cavalry and allowed more efficient allocation of resources

**Table 8.2. Military Spending on Regular Forces and Auxiliary Cavalry**

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Proportion of Tianbao average annual revenue (57,000,000 cloth-grain units)</i>	<i>Number of soldiers</i>	<i>Cost/soldier</i>	<i>Nature of mission</i>
Entire Tang frontier military (ca. 740)	12,900,000 cloth-grain units	22.63%	490,000	26.3 cloth-grain units	Frontier defense
Khitan (720)	710,000 bolts	1.25%	43,000	16.5 bolts	Attack on Türk Empire in Mongolia
Khitan (722)	50,000 bolts	0.09%	8 tribes (43,000)	1.2 bolts	Frontier defense
Qay (723)	30,000 bolts	0.05%	5 tribes (30,000)	1.0 bolts	Frontier defense
Qay (732)	200,000 bolts	0.35%	30,000	6.7 bolts	Attack on Khitan in Manchuria

than the Northern Song system. Although stereotypically disloyal “barbarian” troops conventionally are faulted for the An Lushan rebellion, Xuanzong’s relaxation of institutional controls over the frontier armies is to blame (Skaff 2000).

### III. Tang Horse System and the Horse Trade

The horse trade was the final major area in which Sui-Tang governments and Turko-Mongols had opportunities for mutually beneficial economic relations. Herders generally exchanged steppe horses for plain bolts of monetary silk produced in China. Pastoral nomads used the silk to purchase other goods or fabricate luxury clothing or decorations. Horses were in demand in China and elsewhere throughout medieval Eurasia to provide rapid overland transportation and communications. Mounts also were essential to China-Inner Asia warfare because of the decisive role cavalry played in determining the outcome of battle (Skaff 2009b). Many scholars have noted that China relied upon imported Inner Asian horses from the first millennium BCE until the early twentieth century to meet the needs of

the military and public and private transportation (Beckwith 1991, 185; Creel 1970b, 183–4; Sinor 1972, 174). Paul Smith (1991, 17–31) has refined this thesis by pointing out that demand for imported horses depended on a dynasty's control over horse-producing pasture regions. Dynasties that expanded into the China-Inner Asia borderlands, such as the Sui and Tang, had fewer problems procuring horses because of the greater availability of pasture and personnel with expertise in equine care. During the first half of the Tang, the government was successful at exploiting these borderlands to obtain horses. The government raised its own equines on official ranches and purchased additional mounts as needed at market rates from friendly bridle tribes.

Previous scholarship on the Sui-Tang trade of silk for horses has ignored the roles of the ranches and bridle tribes in the borderlands and focused on exchanges with the Mongolia-based Türk and Uighur empires (Beckwith 1991; Ecsedy 1968; Jagchid 1989). Often referred to as “tribute trade” because it masqueraded as a gift exchange, this sort of transaction was a common element of Eastern Eurasian diplomacy in which “the price fluctuated according to the ratio of the actual power between the two sides” (Jagchid 1989, 180). Any premium that China-based empires paid above the market cost of horses served as an indemnity that guaranteed peace. Despite the value of this scholarship for understanding the role of trade in medieval foreign relations, it overemphasizes Mongolia as a supplier of horses to the expansive Sui to mid-Tang empires that controlled the China-Inner Asia borderlands. Tribute trade with Mongolia was minimal until the Tang lost most of the borderlands after the An Lushan rebellion. As will be demonstrated below, the changing patterns of the silk-horse trade closely correlated with the balance of power in Eastern Eurasia.

The Sui and Tang needed horses to supply the army, government agencies, palace, and postal relay and transportation systems. The total horses in use at any one time is unknown, but a rough estimate for the early eighth century is several hundred thousand.<sup>33</sup> The number of replacement horses needed annually also is uncertain, but probably was in the tens of thousands, based on Song and Qing Dynasty rates.<sup>34</sup> Military expeditions would have caused short-term spikes in demand. Qing Dynasty armies campaigning in Inner Asia required three horses for every soldier (Perdue 2005, 354), so a typical Tang force of 20,000 to 30,000 regular troops might have required 60,000 to 90,000 mounts.<sup>35</sup> Little information survives on Sui horse procurement, so the discussion below will focus on how the Tang exploited the borderlands to breed or purchase steeds.

### A. Borderland Breeding Ranch System

The Tang government ranch network was established early in the dynasty, most likely adopted directly from the Sui's horse administration, which in turn descended from the earlier Northern Dynasties and Han models (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 151; Di Cosmo 2002a, 232; Xiong 2006, 111). Of these, only the Han and Tang's are

relatively well-documented. The ranches bred horses, cattle, camels, asses, mules, and sheep. More than half of the Tang ranch livestock in the eighth century consisted of horses, which had the greatest importance to warfare and transportation (Table 8.3<sup>36</sup>). The Court of Imperial Stud in the capital, headed by a chief minister, oversaw the network of ranches established initially in borderland prefectures of western Guannei (modern Ningxia) and Longyou (southeastern Gansu) that covered an area of 1,230 *qing* (15,990 acres). As the herds grew, the system expanded to the northwest into the Hexi grasslands. The total number of ranches varied over time. For example, there were forty-seven in the mid-seventh century and perhaps as many as sixty-five in the early eighth century. A director of herds (*mujian*) headed each ranch, which ranged in size from under 3,000 to over 5,000 horses. The ranches were divided into herds (*qun*) of 120 horses, each employing a chief herdsman (*muzhang*) and several grooms. The organizational structure apparently was modified on several occasions, but the basic system remained intact.<sup>37</sup>

Although the Sui and Tang established an administrative system to manage numerous ranches, herd size fluctuated enormously over time. Table 8.3 compiles chronologically the scattered extant data on livestock populations of the ranch system. The Sui herds, surpassing 100,000 heads, quickly dispersed when the dynasty dissolved into civil war. The Tang obtained 3,000 Sui horses in 618 and combined them with 2,000 mounts from the Türks to establish a modest breeding program. After the empire stabilized, Tang herds underwent tremendous growth to the point where the dynasty reportedly had 706,000 heads by the mid-seventh century. A long decline occurred during Empress Wu's period of dominance over government. When Xuanzong took the throne in 713, there were only 200,000 heads, which represents an almost two-thirds decrease from seventh-century highs. By 731 the number of horses had reached a known eighth-century peak of 440,000 heads, representing an increase of over 80 percent. The final figures for Xuanzong's reign date to 753 and 754 on the eve of the An Lushan rebellion, when herd size had shrunk around a quarter to about 325,000. Despite the decrease, there were signs of a successful breeding program. An imperial edict of 719 established a policy of sending studs to the ranches only during the spring breeding season (see note 36). The more than 130,000 mares mentioned in 753—about 40 percent of the total horse herd—and over 200,000 juveniles in 754—comprising about 60 percent—confirm that the purpose of the ranches was stockbreeding. Juveniles remained in the herds until they were two or three years of age when they were dispatched, as needed, to the palace or various government agencies (see note 36). According to my estimate, young horses probably increased in real terms by over 14,000 heads, or about 7 percent, between 753 and 754. Most likely, a breeding ranch horse population of around 300,000 was sufficient to meet the Tang's regular horse replacement needs.

After the An Lushan rebellion, the Tang's ranch system declined precipitously. By the ninth century a dynasty that once had hundreds of thousands of mounts was struggling to maintain a breeding herd of several thousand horses. The high and low

Table 8.3. Sui-Tang Breeding Herd Sizes

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total livestock</i>	<i>Horses</i>	<i>Mares</i>	<i>Juveniles</i>	<i>Source</i>
ca. 590		100,000+			CFYG 621:23a–b
618		5,000			XTS 50:1337
ca. 650		706,000			WYYH 869:1b; ZYGJ 11:26b; XTS 50:1337
713	387,000	240,000			WYYH 869:3a; ZYGJ 11:28b; XTS 50:1338
725	766,000	430,000			Same
731		440,000			QTW 361:4139
753		319,387	133,598 (41.8% of total herd)	185,789 (est.)	YHJX 3:59
754	605,603	325,792	125,712 (est.)	200,080 (61.4% of total herd)	XTS 50:1338; THY 72:1303; CFYG 621:25b
762		30,000			THY 72:1303; XTS 50:1339
804	9,500	5,700			THY 66:1146; CFYG 621:26b
819		3,200 or 3,300			THY 66:1146; CFYG 621:28b; XTS 50:1339
837		7,000			THY 66:1147; XTS 50:1339



points of herd populations confirm the Smith thesis that the key factor influencing herd sizes was control of pasture regions. When most of the China-Inner Asia borderlands were lost during the Sui-Tang transition and after the An Lushan rebellion, herd size collapsed.<sup>38</sup>

### B. Borderland Market Purchases

Aside from government ranches, the Tang procured horses in trade with owners of private ranches, bridle tribes, and independent pastoral nomadic powers. Government demand for purchases of horses generally was inversely related to the size of official herds. At times the court sought to requisition or purchase mounts from the interior. For example, in preparation for a campaign against Tibet in 677 Gaozong rescinded a ban on private horse rearing and allowed provincial officials to use government funds to purchase horses (ZZTJ 202:6388; Beckwith 1987, 43–5). A more important source was the bridle tribes living along the Tang's northern frontier.

The Tang state's interest in borderland horse acquisitions is evident in recorded descriptions of horse breeds of forty-two different peoples, almost half of which were classified as bridle tribes. For example, the Turkic variety was characterized as "peerlessly cunning, a well-proportioned body and unmatched for long journeys and hunting." The Manchurian ponies of the Khitan were smaller, but praised for their suitability in forest travel. Brand designs also were recorded. Most appear to be *tamgha* tribal-identification symbols of Turko-Mongol origin, but some bridle tribes used actual or modified Chinese characters. For example, the Pugu's brand was a Turkic *tamgha*, but the Qibi's was a rare Chinese character (*qiu*). Tang concern for recording characteristics of Turko-Mongol breeds and brands most likely was related to the importance of these pastoral nomads as suppliers (THY 72:1305–8; Dobrovits 2004, 258; Ma and Wang 1995, 44).

The Sui-Tang governments had abundant silk to buy mounts because farming households in the agricultural heartland paid a portion of their taxes in cloth (chapter 2). Monetary silks, usually produced in the north, were tabbies, undyed simple weaves of farming households, remitted to the government in standardized bolts (*pi*) twelve meters long by fifty-four centimeters wide (Niida 1933, 659; Twitchett 1970, 140). Standardization allowed monetary textiles to circulate widely as a "high denomination" currency for purchases of valuable goods, such as livestock, land, and slaves (Trombert and La Vaissière 2007).<sup>39</sup> The Tang state transported great quantities of monetary silk from the interior to the northern frontier to pay military expenses (Arakawa 1992, 2001, 12–8; Trombert 2000). What pastoral nomads did with the monetary silk after selling their horses is not documented in textual or archaeological sources.<sup>40</sup> Though Turko-Mongols willingly exchanged their horses for monetary silk, when circumstances dictated, as will be shown below, they would accept other forms of currency.

Tang administrative regulations permitted foreigners to sell goods at state-run markets. Although ambassadors of Turkic khanates and other polities could trade with imperial approval at the capital (XTS 46:1196; Rotours 1974, 95; Wang 2005, 113), commerce probably was most common along the frontier under the supervision of the Exchange Market Directorate (*hushi jian*).<sup>41</sup> A Tang statute prescribes the procedure for setting up borderland markets:

When foreigners (*wai fan*) and frontier-dwelling subjects participate in an exchange market, the officials in charge of the market should make an inspection. A ditch should be dug around the four sides of the market. A fence should be constructed. Men should be posted to guard the gate. On market day after the *mao* hour (5–7 a.m.), each shall bring his goods or livestock to the marketplace. First the officials and foreigners (*fan ren*) should establish the prices of goods, then trade may begin (BKLT 83:10b; Niida 1933, 715–6; Twitchett 1966, 224).

Interpreters and brokers, who were natives of the borderlands, acted as intermediaries. Sogdians and other peoples translated for Turko-Mongols chiefs on the northwestern frontier, as mentioned in chapter 2. Brokers set prices based on expertise in certain goods, such as horses. The two most infamous members of this profession were the future rebels, An Lushan and Shi Siming, who worked in exchange markets prior to joining the Tang army. Their qualifications included fluency in the “languages of the Six Barbarians,” which resulted from their upbringings in families of mixed ancestry in the northern Hebei borderlands (JTS 200a:5376; XTS 225a:6426–8; ZZTJ 214:6817; Pulleyblank 1955, 8, n. 9; Rotours 1962, 11). According to Tang regulations, scribes were supposed to record the color, age, and height of each animal purchased (see note 49 below). Superior steeds were dispatched to the court. Herdsmen drove the remaining livestock to governmental agencies as needed (TLD 22:30a–b).

Fragmentary Turfan documents confirm the existence of newly purchased horses traveling long distances on the imperial postal system. At least five herds, ranging in size from seventeen to one hundred, passed through a horse depot and postal station in the vicinity of Xizhou (Turfan) in 754 and 755. The places of purchase, when recorded, were all major garrison centers—Karashahr, Anxi (Kucha), and Beiting (Tingzhou) (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). For example, Beiting dispatched twenty-three newly purchased horses southward in April 754.<sup>42</sup> In another type of case, horse-purchase commissioners travelled more than one thousand kilometers from the Hexi and Shuofang Military Commissions to buy horses in the northwest (see chapter 1, Map 1.4). This is mentioned in a Xizhou Area Command document denying the request of a visiting Horse Purchase Commissioner, Mi Zhentuo, for three hundred sheets of paper, two pens, and a stick of ink in June 728. The reason

for the denial was that “Hexi Military Commission is buying horses, this is not a market by special imperial edict” and past horse purchase commissioners from Hexi and Shuofang had supplied themselves (O 5839; Jiang 1994, 118; Naitō 1960, 35–8). Based on Tang record-keeping practices and the amount of paper requested, Mi Zhentuo probably planned to purchase at least several hundred horses.<sup>43</sup> These documents give the impression that the purchase and transfer of horses over long distances were routine aspects of frontier civil and military affairs.

The 742 Xizhou market register—a document stipulating the amounts that government agencies were permitted to pay for goods at the town bazaar—demonstrates that Tang officials also must have bought horses at local markets. The register was supposed to be revised every ten days to reflect available goods and prices accurately, which may explain why only two types of horses are listed, mares and Turkic geldings, and the highest quality horses, superior grade, were not available. Historians have presented persuasive evidence that the prices in the 742 register were reasonably close to market rates (Ikeda 1992, 459; Trombert and La Vaissière 2007, 18).<sup>44</sup> As Table 8.4<sup>45</sup> demonstrates, payment for a horse varied according to its gender and fitness, and the width of monetary silk used to make the purchase. For example, an inferior mare cost seven bolts of wide-loom silk tabby, while a fine Turkic gelding commanded twenty-two narrow-loom bolts. The Xizhou price information clarifies that the market price of a horse on the northwestern frontier varied, but roughly lay in a range of approximately seven to twenty-two bolts of monetary silk.

Turko-Mongols, who most likely were bridle tribe elites, appear to have been the main suppliers of foreign horses. For example, seventh-century “exchange markets”—involving the trade of silk for sheep and horses—allegedly existed while the Türks were Tang bridle tribes in the Ordos region.<sup>46</sup> In the northwest, two Turkic sellers of sixteen horses most likely belonged to bridle tribes because they are identified in a Turfan document as “Three Clans chiefs,” who, as noted previously, had become Tang clients in 714 under the Beiting protector-general.<sup>47</sup>

*Table 8.4. Official Horse Prices at Xizhou Market, 742*

<i>Horse type</i>	<i>Horse quality</i>	<i>Price in bolts of wide-loom tabby silk (dalian)</i>	<i>Price in bolts of narrow-loom tabby silk (xiaolian)</i>
Turkic gelding	Superior-ordinary	20	22
	Ordinary	18	20
	Inferior	16	18
Mare	Superior-ordinary	9	10
	Ordinary	8	9
	Inferior	7	8

Various documents found at Turfan provide scattered evidence that Turkic elites sold their horses at market prices within the range of Table 8.4. A Tang local official somewhere in the northwest was requesting thirteen bolts of wide-loom silk tabby to purchase a seven-year-old gelding from “among the foreigners” (*fan*) in 707.<sup>48</sup> A highly fragmentary early eighth-century Tang ledger preserves snippets of information. “Chiefs” with Turkic titles, such as *tarqan* and *irkin*, were selling small numbers of horses and camels in exchange for wide-loom silk tabby. The only fully preserved transaction is a seven-year-old red gelding costing fifteen bolts.<sup>49</sup> At Luntai County on the southern fringe of the Jungarian Basin, a “Türk horse” with armor was purchased in 728 for fourteen bolts of wide-loom silk tabby valued at 400 cash per bolt (Ikeda 1979, 355; Yongxing Wang 1994, 321–6). The most striking transaction involved the “Türgish chief Duohai Tarqan” who sold three mounts for 20,400 bronze coins in the early eighth century.<sup>50</sup> The local government, perhaps short on silk, tendered the coins weighing about ninety-three kilograms and equivalent to fifty-one bolts of wide-loom silk tabby (or 17 bolts/horse).<sup>51</sup> Duohai probably was a Tang client, based on evidence of military service mentioned in another document.<sup>52</sup> These glimpses of horse sales preserved in Turfan documents support a hypothesis that Turkic bridle tribe elites in the northwest enjoyed the privilege of selling small numbers of horses to the Tang at market rates. We can surmise that the prospect of livestock sales provided an economic incentive for tribes, and especially their leaders, to render allegiance to the Tang.

The relative importance of Turko-Mongols, the official ranch system, and private breeders as suppliers of horses to the Tang on the northwestern frontier, can be gauged based on three surviving horse registers from the Xizhou Long-Distance Travel Depot around 722. As horses were dropped off or picked up at the station, clerks recorded an entry for each that included information on age, color, fitness, brands, and distinctive features. Any foreign and/or private brands that accompanied official ones indicated previous ownership (Table 8.5<sup>53</sup>). Based on the data, foreign sources supplied more than half of the mounts. Seven percent came from private owners, probably either purchased from horse breeders or levied from wealthy households, a practice halted in 721 (CFYG 621:25a; QTW 28:319). A little over one-third appears to have originated at official ranches. Given the distance of one thousand kilometers from the main Tang breeding ranches in Hexi, the proportion of horses with official origins is perhaps surprisingly high.

Overall, data in these documents indicate that Turko-Mongols were the major, but not exclusive, source of horse supplies in the northwestern borderlands in the early eighth century. On the purchase registers of local government, clerks prosaically recorded transactions without any indication that they classified these horse transactions as tributary gifts. Scholars of the Qing have debated how pastoral nomadic chieftains conceptualized these transactions—whether as commerce or ritual submission (Di Cosmo 2003; Perdue 2005, 402–3)—but the medieval sources offer no clues.

Table 8.5. Brands of Horses at a Xizhou Long-Distance Depot, 722

	<i>Official Only</i>	<i>Foreign &amp; Official</i>	<i>Private &amp; Official</i>	<i>Foreign, Private &amp; Official</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total</i>
No.	36	55	7	2	3	103
Proportion	35.0%	53.4%	6.8%	1.9%	2.9%	

### C. Court and Frontier Tribute Trade

Eurasian diplomatic protocol, discussed in chapter 5, called for gift exchanges between visiting embassies and host monarchs. Gift exchanges of horses for silks or other luxury goods, hereafter called *tribute trade*, took two forms. The first—accompanying diplomatic missions—involved bestowing small numbers of fine horses at court in exchange for luxury goods. The second—resulting from negotiations between Tang emperors and powerful Turkic qaghans—entailed exchanges of large numbers of ordinary horses for monetary silk on the frontier. Both types of tribute ostensibly were displays of friendly relations, but while the former mainly had symbolic significance, the latter was intertwined with commercial and strategic interests. Tang gifts that exceeded the market value of tribute in livestock served as a hidden indemnity to guarantee a truce. Large-scale tribute trade varied in volume according to the balance of power in Eastern Eurasia and only became the dominant mode of horse-silk commerce after the An Lushan rebellion.

Ambassadors brought many exotic breeds of horses from distant locales to Chang'an and Luoyang (Ma and Wang 1995, 70, 76; Schafer 1963, 59–64). In some cases the Tang rulers even bestowed their own fine horses and saddles upon visiting ambassadors (Wang 2005, 103). Commercial aspects of these exchanges are revealed by Tang administrative regulations that required officials to catalogue and calculate the value of each envoy's tribute in order to set a fair price of imperial gifts to be bestowed in return (Wang 2005, 103, 130). Personnel of the Court of the Imperial Stud had the task of grading the quality of tribute livestock. Only the finest animals were dispatched to the imperial stables. Common or ailing mounts were placed under the care of the Court of the Imperial Stud, which presumably assigned them to its breeding ranches or other government agencies (TLD 18:13b–16b; XTS 48:1257–8; Rotours 1974, 408–15; Ma and Wang 1995, 77). These fine steeds that Sui and Tang emperors obtained through ceremonial exchanges at court have garnered much attention (Schafer 1963, 66–70) because they were the glamorous Rolls Royces and Porches of their day.

Although tribute of horses at court allowed emperors to fill palace stables with an impressive array of fine mounts, these were not a major source of horse supply. When numbers of horses proffered at court are known, they are insignificant in

comparison to the size of Tang official herds. For example, a survey of entries from 670 to 756 on “Court tribute” in the Song Dynasty compendium *Ancient documents to aid the divining of the past* (CFYG 970:16a–971:19b), reveals that the single largest delivery of horses recorded is one thousand, from the Türks in late 703 (CFYG 970:18a). Other sources clarify that this “tribute” actually was Qapaghan Qaghan’s betrothal gift to Empress Wu mentioned in chapter 7. The next largest is 150 horses from the Türks and Toghuz-Oghuz in 747 (CFYG 971:16a). The value of imperial gifts exchanged for tribute horses is rarely available. In one instance in 729 the son of the ruler of Khuttal received thirty pieces of silk of unknown type in return for two horses. If the silks were luxury weaves, as seems most likely, this may represent a fair exchange for two fine horses (CFYG 975:9a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 49–50).<sup>54</sup> Bestowals of splendid steeds at court had diplomatic significance and prestige value, but only had a trifling impact on Tang herd size.

Larger deliveries of horses, which the court historians usually classified as tribute, occurred in various parts of the Tang-Inner Asia borderlands. For example, in 707 the Türgish qaghan Saqal delivered “tribute” of five thousand horses, two hundred camels, and over one hundred thousand cows and sheep to demonstrate friendly intent after succeeding his father (JTS 97:3045; XTS 122:4363; ZZTJ 208:6608 Chavannes [1900] 1969, 184). The Tang’s exchanged “gifts” are unknown. Substantial numbers of horses in the thousands and tens of thousands, serving as betrothal or tribute gifts, are mentioned in the early seventh century. Ilig Qaghan of the Türks sent several tens of thousands of cattle and horses to the Tang in 628, presumably expecting a substantial payment of silk in return (CFYG 970:6a). The largest known delivery of horses was Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan’s betrothal gift of fifty thousand mounts in 643 (Chapter 7).<sup>55</sup> These large droves of equines probably mainly supplied frontier garrisons and breeding ranches.

Deliveries of large numbers of horses required planning and clear political agreements to avoid conflicts. On one hand, pastoral nomads had a strong motive to exchange surplus livestock for more stable forms of wealth such as silk. On the other hand, the Tang had little incentive to accept excessive numbers of steeds because idle horses requiring fodder could be a fiscal and logistical nightmare. For example, an early eighth-century Xizhou Area Command document concerns the problem of “horses purchased to be sent east” that had been retained in Xizhou because they were too thin to travel. The underweight horses were “ruining the official granary.” One official proposed keeping twenty in the Xizhou official herd, selling seventy at the local bazaar, and giving the remainder to the prefectural militia, which had a shortage of mounts.<sup>56</sup> Even when the government needed horses, large purchases of livestock required long-term planning to ship monetary silk to the frontier using carts and pack animals. For example, in 732 the Tang government hired a team of pack drivers to transport “military rewards,” most likely textiles, from Chang’an to Kucha (Anxi). They departed in the third lunar month and arrived in the eighth lunar month after traveling more than two thousand three hundred kilometers,



or about fifteen kilometers per day. This obviously was a major undertaking, requiring the coordination of large numbers of men and animals.<sup>57</sup> We can conclude that any significant Tang purchase of horses on the frontier would require arrangements to be finalized at least six months in advance to ship tens of thousands of bolts of monetary silk.

Given the logistical challenges of accepting large numbers of tribute horses, disputes sometimes occurred when Turko-Mongol powers were eager to sell. Disagreements punctuated the best-documented tribute trade of the early Tang—a pact between Xuanzong and Bilgä Qaghan of 727. As discussed in chapter 1, after the improvement of Tang defenses north of the Yellow River in 709, the Second Türk Empire had little leverage to forcibly extract rewards or brides from the Tang. Likewise, Xuanzong never exerted sufficient pressure on Bilgä Qaghan to compel him to accept investiture. Xuanzong broached the possibility of horse-silk exchange and marriage relations as early as 721 on the condition that Bilgä Qaghan demonstrate peaceful intent (JTS 194a:5175; XTS 215b:6053; ZZTJ 212:6744; CFYG 980:7b–8b; TZLJB 33:1499–50). Although marriage negotiations reached an impasse, as described in chapter 7, a trade agreement finally was sealed in 727. Bilgä Qaghan won Xuanzong's trust by turning over a letter from Tibet requesting Türk participation in an attack on Hexi. Xuanzong was pleased because Tibet had replaced the Türks as the Tang's main rival since the demise of Qapaghan Qaghan. Improved relations with the Türks on the Tang Empire's northern flank allowed Xuanzong to concentrate more forces to the west (Twitchett 2000, 132–7). Bilgä Qaghan—apparently limited in his ability to raid because his outer tribes were restive and the Tang had improved its defenses—was eager to tap into an external source of revenue.

The Tang-Türk trade was carried out at Xishouxiang City, a Tang garrison on the main route from Mongolia, northwest of the great loop of the Yellow River (chapter 1, Map 1.4). This was on or near the former site of the seventh-century Yanran Protectorate that had overseen Uighur bridle tribes in Mongolia. The medieval histories claim that the Tang shipped several hundred thousand bolts of monetary silk annually to Xishouxiang in exchange for Türk horses that were then driven to government ranches to improve breeding stock (ZZTJ 213:6779; CFYG 999:25a; JTS 8:191; 194a:5177; XTS 50:1338, 215b:6053; Rotours 1974, 895). More information about the trade can be gleaned from Xuanzong's correspondence to Bilgä Qaghan's successor, Tängri Qaghan, around 735 or 736.<sup>58</sup> According to Xuanzong, he and the "former Qaghan" (i.e., Bilgä Qaghan) sealed a pact (*yue*) limiting trade to three to four thousand horses annually at a "harmonious market" (*heshi*) (QJJ 11:9a–10a; QTW 286:13a–b). Xuanzong's usage of "harmonious market" differs from the official term "exchange market," mentioned above, designating frontier bazaars (XTS 46:1193; Rotours 1974, 78). Evidently, "harmonious market" refers to tribute trade because the same expression describes late Tang premium-priced transactions with the Uighur (JTS 195:5207).



The main purpose of Xuanzong's correspondence was to deal with problems related to trade in the first few years of Tängri's reign. In a letter of late summer, Xuanzong describes four tribal elites arriving in succession in the year of Tängri's enthronement (734 or 735), including an envoy of the Kirghiz, a Türk outer tribe. The first chief had more than double the annual quota of horses, which the Tang agreed to keep. The horses of the next three envoys were not accepted, but they received gifts totaling twenty thousand bolts of monetary silk (QJJ 11:8a-9a; QTW 286:12b-13a). In a letter of mid-winter, Xuanzong replied to Tängri's complaint that the Tang had rejected too many horses. Xuanzong claimed to have refused 10 to 20 percent of equines that were old or infirm. The emperor was unwilling to be a "laughingstock" who purchased inferior mounts (QJJ 11:10a-11a; QTW 286:14a-b). The excessive numbers of horses being driven to the Tang frontier, and especially deliveries from at least one outer tribe, the Kirghiz, may indicate that Tängri was using the trade to gain support of client tribes. Xuanzong seemed willing to make some concessions to the new qaghan because, unlike his father Bilgä, Tängri had accepted investiture from the Tang.

Another letter contains information on prices and details other problems with the markets. Xuanzong describes accepting fourteen thousand horses "last year" (734 or 735) to show good faith because Tängri was recently enthroned and the two rulers had agreed to establish a father-son relationship. The Tang had been unable to make full payment because far more horses than expected had arrived. Xuanzong alludes to logistical difficulties by mentioning that in the past "when the horses were less numerous, the goods [textiles] were easily managed." The settlement of the debt had been delayed further, Xuanzong complains, because he was hosting a wedding, commoners were enjoying a tax holiday, and expenses were endless. The emperor calculated that he owed 500,000 bolts of monetary silk for 14,000 horses, a rate of about thirty-six bolts per horse (QJJ 11:9a-10a; QTW 286:13a-b). The high prices, approximately double those on the northwestern frontier, may explain Bilgä Qaghan's boast, quoted at the start of the chapter, that the Tang gave him abundant wealth. The transaction is best categorized as "tribute trade" involving the Tang's payment of premium prices for Türk horses.

The long-term impact of the Tang-Türk tribute trade was not particularly significant because it must have ended when Tängri died in 741 and the second empire dissolved in civil war. The Tang's subsidy to the Türks was not a cure for the problems of a tottering empire, as Bilgä Qaghan and the material school of China-Inner Asian relations may have thought. The impact on the Tang horse system also was not momentous, aside from improved breeding stock. The Tang ranch herd size had already recovered by 727 and several thousand Türk horses per year would have met only about a tenth of Tang annual replacement needs. In fact, Xuanzong had a financial incentive to minimize tribute purchases from the Türks and maximize procurement at market rates from bridle tribes and domestic breeders. From the Türk point of view, the trade was meant to obtain revenue to resolve domestic political

problems, while the Tang had a strategic goal of protecting its northern flank in order to deal with Tibet to the west.

After the An Lushan rebellion, when the Tang lost its ranch system, the balance of power shifted in Eastern Eurasia. The Uighur Empire in Mongolia was able to demand high prices and deliver inferior mounts over the long term from 760 to 830. The post-An Lushan rebellion tribute trade has been studied at length and only a few comments are necessary here. The price, set at forty bolts of silk per horse, was comparable to the Tang-Türk tribute trade.<sup>59</sup> What is frequently overlooked is that the Tang still had access to some sources of horse purchases in the China-Inner Asia borderlands. A market was set up for trade with Tibet in 815 and Tangut bridle tribes in the Ordos borderlands remained an important source of supply. Private traders sometime purchased Tangut horses to resell to the Tang (Ma and Wang 1995, 75–6; Twitchett 1966, 225, n. 140). During the Northern Song, the horse supply became a greater problem because of the loss of most Inner Asian borderlands and a Liao Dynasty embargo on horse sales (Smith 1991).

## Conclusion

The material school of China-Inner Asia relations has overestimated the ability of Turkic powers to profit from relations with the Sui to middle Tang dynasties. The khanates that ruled successively over Mongolia from 552 to 744—Türks (twice), Sir-Yantuo, Uighur, and Basmil—never experienced long-term political stability. Intervals of successful raiding during the reigns of Illig Qaghan and Qapaghan Qaghan gave way to internal turmoil rather than continued prosperity. Only the Uighur achieved political stability while extracting wealth from the Tang after the An Lushan rebellion, but even their empire fell in 840 for unclear reasons (Drompp 2005a). While the case of the Second Uighur Empire partially supports the material school's position, Sui to mid-Tang relations with Turkic powers lend credence to scholars who have argued that pastoral nomadic states are vulnerable to external pressure from sedentary polities that limit access to pasture, plunder, trade, and subsidies (Khazanov 1994; Lattimore [1951] 1962, 252–3). In explaining the Eastern Eurasian balance of power, a key factor that the material school overlooks is the political, military, and economic importance of controlling the China-Inner Asia borderlands.

Sui to mid-Tang suzerainty over an expansive northern frontier lowered costs of horse procurement and defenses. The borderlands provided grasslands that nourished horses of the state breeding ranch system and sustained Turko-Mongol bridle tribes whose elites sold horses at market rates. Tribute trade at “harmonious markets” with diplomatically negotiated premium prices only began to play a major role in horse supply when most borderland territory was lost after the An Lushan rebellion. Militarily, client bridle tribes provided cavalry forces through the mid-Tang

that were more cost effective and flexibly allocated than regular garrison troops because warriors could be demobilized to practice pastoral nomadism with their families in the regions around garrisons. In times of need, these Turko-Mongol auxiliaries could be mustered quickly to provide highly skilled mounted archers. As a consequence, the Tang required less spending on soldiers and horses than the Northern Song, which lacked access to the China-Inner Asia borderlands. In addition to being comparatively inexpensive, the availability of quality mounts and cavalry forces contributed to the Sui to mid-Tang military's effectiveness at defending against attacks, expanding into Inner Asia, and minimizing payments of indemnities to Mongolia-based powers.

Much to the chagrin of Turkic qaghans, the Sui and Tang were able to attract bridle tribes who found the administrative arrangements to be familiar and economic opportunities to be attractive. Client chiefs rendered allegiance to Sui-Tang emperors for some of the same reasons that they hewed to Turko-Mongol rulers, seeking pecuniary gain from pasture, ad hoc gifts, salaries, livestock sales, and plunder from military victories. Although bridle tribes were subject to administration and taxation, the hand of Sui-Tang governments was light, in keeping with Turko-Mongol tradition.

Economic incentives to render allegiance to a Sui-Tang or Turko-Mongol monarch depended on personal preferences and contingent circumstances. In the long term, Mongolia-based qaghans had a greater abundance of grassland to allocate to pastoral nomadic clients, but China-based rulers offered frontier markets where livestock commanded higher prices. Other economic incentives fluctuated according to the balance of power in Eastern Eurasia. War leadership was not a Türk monopoly. Taizong and Gaozong rivaled Illig Qaghan and Qapaghan Qaghan as providers of plunder to client cavalry. Xuanzong's conquests were less dramatic, but his frontier military provided more opportunities for salaried service, while denying the Second Türk Empire profits from raiding. After the An Lushan rebellion, the Uighur qaghans obtained generous indemnities for a century. As economic incentives appeared and disappeared at particular times and places, Turko-Mongol clients would have reexamined their loyalties to their masters. Comparative economic advantage was more geographically and chronologically variable than the material school assumes.

# Breaking Bonds

The preceding chapters have focused on efforts of Sui-Tang emperors and Turko-Mongol elites to forge political and diplomatic agreements, generally in the guise of patron-client ties. Even though their mutual bonds ideally were ironclad, this book has provided many examples of leaders' conscious decisions to sever alliances due to changing personal and state interests. Traditionally, the heated rhetoric that ensued from the "divorce" of two parties blamed the breakup on natural antagonisms. Literati Confucians stereotyped Turko-Mongols as intrinsically disloyal. Meanwhile, the Turkic inscriptions claimed that Tang rule was so oppressive that "sons [of Türks] worthy of becoming lords became slaves, and their daughters worthy of becoming ladies became servants of the Tabgach [Tang] people" (Tekin 1968, 264; Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 334–5). Both assertions fuel the lingering misperception that China and Inner Asia were mutually hostile and incompatible.

This chapter delves beneath the rhetoric to examine contingent forces that undermined patron-client bonds. Interstate agreements forged in the guise of patron-client ties mirrored those of domestic patrimonial politics in being susceptible to interpersonal conflicts, the inevitability of death, and venal or inept behavior. However, a ruler's ties with outer clients had additional vulnerabilities due to uncontrollable exogenous factors. Environmental disasters, especially extreme drought or heavy snow, could trigger conflict and migration. Moreover, multipolar state relations could create competition for the services of clients. These factors, alone or in combination, at a minimum strained relationships and at a maximum broke them. Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol monarchs seeking to retain loyalty of client chiefs were bedeviled by the same challenges.

## I. Environment

Weather added volatility to bonds between Turko-Mongol clients and their patrons. As mentioned in the Introduction, Inner Asian specialists have long recognized that weather disasters threaten the pastoral nomadic subsistence economy and political

organization. The discussion below will demonstrate that harsh weather also influenced relations between the Sui-Tang empires and Turko-Mongols living in the China-Inner Asia borderlands.

The seventh-century Türks provide a case study of the relationship between episodic weather calamities and the willingness of subordinate tribes to seek new patrons. In the winter of 627, heavy snows several feet thick created hardship in the First Türk Empire. When a Tang envoy returned from a visit to Illig Qaghan, he predicted the imminent fall of the Türks, saying to Taizong, “The rise and fall of the Rong and Di particularly depends on the condition of their livestock.” His report and others described hungry people and many dead and emaciated animals. Around this time the Tiele, Uighur, and Sir-Yantuo united to revolt in Mongolia (JTS 109:3289, 194a:5159; XTS 110:4114, 215a:6034; ZZTJ 192:6037, 6044–6; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 175). Meanwhile, North China suffered from drought in 628 and 629 (ZZTJ 192:6049, 6057, 193:6064–5). The unwillingness of Türk overlords to forgive taxes during this period of poor rains may have instigated the revolt of the Khitan and other Manchurian tribes in 628.<sup>1</sup> By 629 the Tang court continued to hear reports of frost and drought on the steppe that had almost exhausted Türk provisions (JTS 68:2507; ZZTJ 193:6065). In December, two of Illig Qaghan’s nephews submitted to the Tang along with their adherents (JTS 194a:5160–1; XTS 215a:6038; ZZTJ 193:6067). The natural disasters that caused many tribes to revolt were a major factor in the Tang victory over the Türks a few months later (Graff 2002b, 64).

For the next fifty years, the Türks remained bridle tribes of the Tang. Despite the claims of the Orkhon inscriptions that Tang rule was oppressive, Türk elites and commoners generally seemed to have been satisfied with the situation. The period from 630 to 676, which coincided with the Tang’s first great period of expansion, also witnessed relatively favorable weather and only two years of famine in North China.<sup>2</sup> The only major tribal “revolt” in that period was a reaction against Taizong’s decision around 640 to move one hundred thousand Türks northward from the Ordos Plateau across the Yellow River into Inner Mongolia. By 644, common tribesmen “rebelled” by returning southward to their former pasturelands in the Ordos. Since the southern edge of the Ordos is only about 250 kilometers from Chang’an, Türk tribesmen were insisting on being closer to the Tang seat of power! The reasons for this unusual “revolt” are unknown. The Türks may have preferred the Ordos grasslands or sought protection against Sir-Yantuo raiding parties from Mongolia (chapter 6). Taizong and Gaozong did not make any known attempts to exclude the Türks from the Ordos again.

The Tang-Türk relationship finally soured in the late 670s, when weather calamities began to strike Chang’an and the Ordos Plateau annually—apparently triggering the rebellions that culminated in the formation of the Second Türk Empire. North China was either exceptionally cold or arid every year in the period from 677 to 682 except for 680. Drought in 677 and cold in 678 must have strained farming and pastoral populations by reducing food stocks and weakening animals (ZZTJ

202:6383–4; Song 1992, 162). The first round of Türk revolts in 679 seems to have been triggered by exceptional cold in Chang'an and the Ordos. Early frosts in September caused famine in the capital region (XTS 36:943; Song 1992, 207). In November the Ordos experienced unseasonably heavy snow and extreme cold that reportedly caused Tang soldiers to suffer from frostbite.<sup>3</sup> A good year in 680 probably contributed to the Tang's initial success at suppressing the rebellion (JTS 84:2803–4; XTS 108:4087; ZZTJ 202:6393–4). However, terribly unfavorable weather struck in 681, when the capital region was hit with drought, early frost, and famine (XTS 35:916; Song 1992, 155). Another year of drought in 682 resulted in continued famine and epidemics (ZZTJ 203:6407, 6411; Song 1992, 171, 547). Tang livestock ranches in the Ordos suffered catastrophic declines, apparently the result of harsh weather and Tang-Türk military conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Türk herds likewise appear to have been decimated. Only two-thirds of the band of warriors who founded the Second Türk Empire had horses. Presumably because of a lack of sheep, these Türks hunted game and raided to survive while hiding in the Yin Mountains north of the great loop of the Yellow River (chapter 1, Map 1.4; JTS 194a:5166–7; XTS 215a:6044; ZZTJ 203:6414; Tekin 1968, 283–4). As a result of the unfavorable weather conditions and ensuing warfare, by the early 680s most Türks had forsaken Tang Gaozong to rendered allegiance to Ilterish Qaghan. Four decades later, the Second Türk Empire faced the same recurring challenges. A bad winter of 723–724 provoked a Toghuz-Oghuz revolt that Bilgä Qaghan suppressed with great difficulty (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 341; Tekin 1968, 277).

Harsh weather not only caused human suffering and dissatisfaction, but it reduced the capacity of a ruler to provide famine relief or mobilize armies. Most crucially, mobility provided Turko-Mongols with greater leeway to break with their ruler. The importance of mobility is illustrated by the fate of the Jihu rebellion of 682 in Suizhou, bordering the Ordos Plateau. By the early 680s many Jihu, farming people described in chapter 2, had become clients of an indigenous Buddhist leader, Bai Tiyu. At the same time that natural disasters were striking the Türks in the neighboring Ordos Plateau, Bai led a rebellion of starving Jihu who sacked the provincial granaries. When Tang forces responded in 683, the Jihu rebels had taken refuge in a stockade. The Tang troops overcame opposition by catapulting rocks and burning the wooden palisades (Rothschild 2005). The same weather calamities triggered the concurrent Jihu and Türks rebellions, but the Tang military more easily reimposed authority over the sedentary subjects than the mobile ones.

## II. Patrimonial Politics

Human life and behavior, which can be as capricious as weather, was another potential peril to patron-client bonds. Agreements were personal—forged between individuals rather than corporate entities or sovereign states—so the shortcomings and



behavioral flaws of individuals or the death of one party could lead to a break. As Chittick (2010, 10) notes concerning the Southern Dynasties, patron-client ties formed “ad hoc personal coalitions . . . that only survived as long as their patron did, and dispersed just as rapidly when he met his downfall.” Even when strategic calculations suggested the advisability of continuing a patron-client bond, human frailties and impetuosity injected an element of contingency into the relationship. Whether hierarchical ties were formed within warlord bands, Sui-Tang government, or between monarchs and Turko-Mongol chiefs, the challenges were similar. Patron-client bonds of Sui-Tang China will be discussed first to provide a basis for comparison.

### A. Warlord and Sui-Tang Politics

The death or removal of a warlord or Sui-Tang monarch forced clients to seek new masters. Niu Xianke, whose meteoric rise from local clerk to grand councilor was discussed in chapter 3, suffered losses of patrons on a number of occasions. Nonetheless, he appears to have been resourceful at cultivating good relationships with his superiors. While Niu was serving in the Hexi Military Commission, he became “trusted subordinate” of Wang Junchuo. After Wang’s death in 727, Niu quickly ingratiated himself with the new commissioner, Xiao Song. Six years later, Xiao Song was forced to retire as grand councilor and Niu attached himself to Xiao’s replacement, Li Linfu. In another type of case, the freewheeling political environment of China during civil war, the deaths of warlords gave clients even greater latitude to seek out new patrons. For example, after the demise of An Lushan in 757, the regional warlord, Tian Chengsi, briefly submitted to the Tang in December 757, but when Shi Siming emerged as the new leader of the rebels, Tian became Shi’s client. By early 763, Shi Siming was dead and Tian again submitted as an outer client of the Tang (JTS 91:3837–8; XTS 210:5923). The personal nature of patron-client politics guaranteed that the removal or death of a patron would force his adherents to find new masters.

Masters might lose the loyalty of adherents who were not treated with respect and generosity. This situation is evident in the relationship between the emperor, Daizong, and his general, Pugu Huai’en. Pugu was a fourth-generation military commander of a Tang bride tribe. During the An Lushan rebellion, Pugu was a vitally important Tang loyalist general leading regular forces and managing relations with the Uighur. Pugu’s association with the court became strained in 763 because of factional rivalries. In a remarkable memorial that he sent to the court, he states that he was discontented because his Shuofang Army had made contributions toward suppressing the rebellion that “exceed those of anyone else . . . yet . . . Your Majesty has shown no special dispensation toward us but, on the contrary, has lent credence to envious slanderers” (Peterson 1970–1, 442–3). After the murder of his son in 764, Pugu revolted and allied with the Tibetan and Uighur empires. As



Charles Peterson (1970–1, 445) points out, Pugu viewed his relationship with Daizong as reciprocal and involving mutual obligations. When the emperor failed to honor Pugu's fidelity, the latter felt justified in terminating his relationship with Daizong. The loyalties of clients like Pugu were personal and conditional. He did not feel obligated to cleave to a master who violated mutual bonds of trust.

Patrons, especially emperors, as the more powerful parties, sometimes terminated relationships with clients who were suspected of incompetence or disloyalty. One of Xuanzong's closest adherents, Wang Zhongsi, who was raised in the palace alongside the emperor's sons (chapter 3), was demoted to a provincial post in the south after refusing to aid an attack on Tibet (JTS 103:3198–3201; XTS 133:4552–4; ZZTJ 215:6877–9). Vicious competition among clients for the attention of the master could even induce dissolution of long-standing and close relationships. Another of Xuanzong's close clients, Wang Maozhong—the personal slave and bodyguard who assisted in the emperor's usurpation of power and later performed admirably as a horse administrator—was accused of treason and executed. It seems unlikely that he sought to overthrow his master, but instead fell victim to pernicious gossip spread by factional rivals at court (JTS 106:3252–5; XTS 121:4335–6; ZZTJ 213:6792–3; Twitchett 1979a, 394–5). When Xuanzong suspected disloyalty, he cold-heartedly disposed of clients who had rendered him important service in the past. Xuanzong's experiences confirm Weber's observation (1968, 1006–8, 1047–51, 1088) that patrimonial and patrimonial-bureaucratic government gave rise to “favoritism—of men close to the ruler who had tremendous power, but always were in danger of sudden, dramatic downfall for purely personal reasons.”

Patrons also are known to have severed relationships by giving away clients. Gao Shang, as mentioned in chapter 3, was a client who was transferred repeatedly among political allies. The previous patron might lose a helpful client, but gain a debt of gratitude. Here, a political alliance was treated as being more important than the patron-client bond. In another case An Lushan provided his patron, Xuanzong, with the services of the excellent Qay archer, Li Baochen. An Lushan probably transferred the client to ingratiate himself with the emperor. However, when An's rebellion broke out, the question of dual loyalties arose, and Li Baochen escaped back to Hebei (JTS 142: 3865–6; XTS 211:5945). He may have fled out of loyalty to his old master or because his association with An Lushan placed his life in danger in the capital. In all of these cases, patrons were willing to disrupt relations with their clients for political gain.

## B. Turko-Mongol Clients

Human foibles and mortality also could disrupt Sui-Tang and Turko-Mongol relations with their clients. Taizong once observed that bridle rule and diplomatic marriage could only “guarantee thirty years of peace” (JTS 194b:5345). He seemed to recognize that bonds of fidelity and kinship could only last approximately one

generation, the lifetimes of individuals involved in making a personal agreement. When a ruler died on the steppe, it was normal for client chieftains to seek out potential new patrons, especially because succession disputes often ignited civil war (chapter 3). For example, after the assassination of Qapaghan Qaghan around 715, the Khitan, Qay, and various Turkic tribes sought the protection of the Tang (JTS 93:2985–9; XTS 111:4153–6; ZZTJ 211:6720–2). The death of the powerful patron, combined with the chaos of civil war, seems to have encouraged this mass submission. Humans were brittle links holding together Turko-Mongol khanates.

Even though Sui-Tang successions did not devolve into large-scale military struggles, the death of an emperor still might instigate Turko-Mongol clients to rebel. The case of Ashina Helu, a member of the Western Türk elite, illustrates this phenomenon. After losing a power struggle, Helu and his remaining one thousand tents of close clients had submitted to the Tang in 648. Taizong banqueted and rewarded Helu, and invested him with a Turkic title of *yabghu* and a simultaneous appointment as commander-in-chief of a bridle district in the western regions (JTS 194b:5186; XTS 43b:1130; ZZTJ 199:6256, 6266). Due in part to Taizong's protection and patronage, Helu revived his career as a Western Türk leader, gaining allegiance of most subordinate On Oq tribes. However, when Taizong died in 649, Helu seized the opportunity to revolt (XTS 215b:6060; ZZTJ 199:6273; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 60). Taizong's death seems to have released Helu from feelings of obligation to the Tang.

Besides the demise of a Sui-Tang patron, another potential threat to a stable relationship was the death of a Turko-Mongol client, which might set off a succession struggle among his adherents. An illuminating case involves the Tiele in Mongolia in the seventh century. As mentioned in chapter 6, their leader, Porun, was particularly loyal to Gaozong and contributed to the Tang military victories over the Western Türks. However, the death of Porun in 661 and the rise of his nephew, Bisudu, was the turning point in the close Tang-Uighur relationship. Perhaps because he was not the designated heir, Bisudu was hostile toward the Tang. After Bisudu repulsed Gaozong's punitive expedition, the Tang general of Tiele extraction, Qibi Heli, managed to broker peace by riding heroically to Mongolia with an escort of only five hundred cavalymen (JTS 195:5197–8; ZZTJ 200:6326–9). Nonetheless, relations between the Tang and Tiele remained cool and there are no records of close cooperation until the rise of the Second Türk Empire in the 680s. The Tang had more success in manipulating a long-term succession of loyal client chiefs among bridle tribes dwelling in the vicinity of Tang garrisons, such as the Hun and Chuyue (chapter 6). The deaths of client chiefs ruling larger and more distant tribes, like the Tiele, seem more likely to spark revolts against the Tang.

Sui-Tang civil or military officials sometimes could be weak links in fulfilling an emperor's obligations to his bridle chiefs. The potential for interpersonal conflicts to destabilize the ties between tribal elites and the Tang emperor is illustrated by the feud from 722 to 727 between the Hexi-Longyou Military Commissioner, Wang

Junchuo, and bridle chiefs of the Uighur, Qibi, Hun, and Sijie. As mentioned in chapter 2, Wang was a commoner who had risen to the height of power in the frontier military, but harbored hatred of the Turkic elites who had treated him with disdain in his youth. The tables turned when Wang rose to military commissioner, giving him authority over the bridle chiefs. He supposedly repaid past insults with insolent conduct and restrictive orders. The tribal leaders “secretly” sent envoys to the court—evading the formal chain of command running through the Hexi-Longyou military headquarters—to complain about Wang’s conduct. Wang dispatched his own messenger saying that the tribes were disobedient and surreptitiously plotted rebellion. Xuanzong eventually sided with Wang, demoting each head of the Uighur, Qibi, Hun, and Sijie tribes to minor positions in South China and promoting new indigenous leaders. Seeking retribution, a Uighur faction avenged their exiled chief by assassinating Wang in fall 727. Consequently, the Uighur fled to the Mongolian Plateau to live under Türk authority (JTS 103:3191–2, 195:5198; XTS 133:4547–8, 217a:6114; ZZTJ 213:6779–80). The personal conflict with Wang strained Tang relations with all four tribes, but only led to an irrevocable split with the Uighur. The Qibi and Hun remained Tang clients (chapter 6). The reasons for continued Qibi and Hun loyalty are unknown, but the feud with Wang surely contributed to the Uighur resolve to sever ties to the Tang.

Another example of interpersonal conflict as a cause of revolt involved the Khitan in 730. At the time, the power behind the Khitan throne, Ketuyu, was visiting the Tang court when a grand councilor insulted him. Zhang Yue, warned that a rebellion was imminent: “Since Ketuyu is cunning and fierce, he has ruled his country’s government for a long time and has won his people’s hearts. Now that we have lost his heart, he will not return.” After Ketuyu travelled back to Manchuria, he killed the puppet Khitan king, allied with the Türks, and raided northern Hebei (JTS 199b:5352–3; XTS 219:6170–2; ZZTJ 213:6789–90). In this case callous remarks alienated Ketuyu, who in turn rallied his personal adherents against Tang overlordship.

Corrupt, incompetent, or inexperienced Tang frontier officials, who refused to honor customary expectations to treat clients benevolently, could erode a client’s fidelity to the emperor. One incident occurred in summer 696 while Empress Wu was on the throne. Yíngzhou Commander-in-Chief, Zhao Wenhui, had set the stage for a rebellion because he allegedly bullied and harassed Khitan leaders. Mounting resentment grew to rebellion when famine struck and Zhao refused to open the local granary to provide relief. Probably driven by hunger, the Khitan captured Yíngzhou, killed Zhao, and pillaged northern Hebei (JTS 199b:5350; XTS 219:6168; ZZTJ 205:6505–7). An analogous situation sparked revolt in 721, when seventy thousand “Lanchi Hu” and Tangut bridle tribes rebelled allegedly because of heavy taxation (chapter 2). They captured two walled towns in Shengzhou for their grain supplies, perhaps indicating that they had been suffering from hunger. After Tang forces inflicted a defeat, a split occurred within the rebel forces as the Tangut attacked the Lanchi Hu. In the ensuing fighting fifteen thousand or perhaps

more rebels were slaughtered (JTS 93:2985–9; XTS 111:4153–6; ZZTJ 212:6745–6). In both cases, the unwillingness of local officials to benevolently provide tax or famine relief seems to have sparked insurrections.

Disputes involving frontier commerce, combined with personal grievances, could place severe strains on relations. The Tang-Türk disagreements over horse trade, described in the previous chapter, did not lead to serious conflict, but two examples involving the Türgish demonstrate that miscommunication and interpersonal disputes could cause war. After Türgish non-participation in Xuanzong's Feng and Shan ritual of 725 signaled increasing tensions (chapter 5), Sulu of the Türgish dispatched one thousand horses to sell at Kucha in 726 without prior authorization. Sulu cleverly tried to take advantage of his marriage to a Tang princess—who actually was a daughter of the Western Türk puppet qaghan, Ashina Huaidao (chapter 7)—by having her issue a princely decree (*jiao*) ordering Anxi Protector-General Du Xian to engage in trade. Du angrily retorted, “How can an Ashina woman proclaim a decree to me, a military commissioner?!” Du ordered the Türgish envoy to be detained and beaten. The horses subsequently died from exposure to the cold and snow. In retaliation Sulu besieged some of the Tang garrisons in the Tarim Basin in coordination with the Tibetans (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). Sulu apparently viewed his military action as a personal vendetta because he withdrew his forces the next year after learning that Du Xian had returned to Chang'an, where he was promoted to grand councilor.<sup>5</sup> The incident only temporarily derailed relations in part because Sulu blamed Du Xian for the problems and not his patron Xuanzong.

Seven years later, the emperor had a harsh reaction to his official's role in a trade conflict with the Türgish. The problems arose in spring 734 when a Türgish ambassador, Kül Irkin, stopped to sell livestock at Beiting on the way to the Tang court (see chapter 1, Map 1.4). Protector-General Liu Huan refused to purchase the Türgish sheep and horses because there were more than needed, and regardless Beiting did not have sufficient funds on hand. According to Xuanzong, purchasing the livestock would have required the textile tax proceeds of an entire Tang prefecture. The dispute escalated when Kül Irkin allegedly attacked Beiting, but was killed in the ensuing battle. Xuanzong attempted to placate Sulu with a letter acknowledging that Kül Irkin's death constituted unauthorized killing of an ambassador, thus violating an accepted norm of Eurasian diplomacy (Sinor 1989). The emperor ordered the execution of Liu Huan and his family for “plotting rebellion” and sent their heads to the qaghan (QJJ 8:6b–8a, 11:5b–8a, QTW 284:14a–15a, 286:10a–12b; Guo 1988, 47). Xuanzong may have fabricated the charge of rebellion to justify decapitating Liu Huan and his relatives in order to practice “frontier justice” or perhaps customary “international law.”<sup>6</sup> Liu Huan's mistreatment of the Shatuo bridle tribe around the same time (chapter 6) also must have contributed toward making him expendable in the emperor's eyes. Nonetheless, the second trade dispute left lingering tensions between Sulu and Xuanzong. Competition with Tibet for Sulu's allegiance, to be discussed below, ultimately led Xuanzong and Sulu into mutual confrontation.

### C. Multipolar Competition

The illusion of a China-centered world that infuses the traditional Chinese sources has obfuscated the multipolarity of medieval Eastern Eurasian politics. Sui-Tang empires faced competition for the allegiance of subordinate Turko-Mongols from great powers based in Mongolia and Tibet. Despite the customary ideal that patron-client bonds were exclusive, borderlands and other politically unstable environments provided clients with opportunities to form dual or multiple loyalties either concurrently or serially (Althoff 2004, 7–9; Scott 2009, 50–61; Skaff 2004, 133–5; Standen 2007). Ultimately, a great power needed to project force to guarantee the subservience of subordinate tribes, which in turn imposed logistical constraints on imperial expansion.

Multipolar politics influenced the allegiances of borderland warlords during the Sui-Tang transition. Gao Kaidao serially rendered allegiance to a salt marsh rebel, a Buddhist monk-emperor whom Gao assassinated, Tang Gaozu, and finally Illig Qaghan. Gao committed suicide in 624 after one of his beloved generals betrayed him in order to submit to the Tang (chapters 3 and 6). Likewise, Liu Wuzhou lost clients after Tang forces defeated his attempt to take Taiyuan in 620. Several rebel generals expediently defected to a more promising future as adherents of Tang Gaozu (JTS 55:2253–4; XTS 86:3711–3; ZZTJ 183:5718–9; THY 66:1145; TMCX, 646; des Rotours 1974, 887–9). Yuan Junzhang succeeded Liu as Illig Qaghan's client in northern Hedong. From the mid-620s Yuan and his subordinates debated the advisability of submitting to the Tang until finally making the switch in 627 as the Türk Empire began to crumble (Skaff 2004, 129–33). Borderland warlords had freedom to change allegiances opportunistically because of their location between the Tang and Türks in an unsettled political environment.

Turko-Mongols could be as opportunistic as Han Chinese warlords in rendering allegiances. The marriages of the Türgish qaghan, Sulu, provide an example of simultaneous loyalties. The Tang emperor, Xuanzong, married the Jinhe Princess to him in early 723. Sulu also had engaged in a marriage exchange with Bilgä Qaghan of the Türks by 734 (chapter 7). In the wake of the above-mentioned trade conflict with the Tang, Sulu married the older sister of the Tibetan *btsanpo* in summer 734 (JTS 194b:5192; XTS 215b:6067; ZZTJ 214:6833; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 46, 82–3; Bacot et al. 1940–46, 49–50). Sulu initially attempted to conceal his betrothal to the Tibetan royal bride, but Tang spies learned of the arrangements. An angry letter from Xuanzong to the *btsanpo* demanded the cancellation of the engagement, “if you go through with this marriage as originally planned, an evil plot will be evident” (QJJ 12:3a–4b; QTW 287:5b–6b). The Tang court claimed that the emperor's investiture and marriage relations with Sulu signified an exclusive bond and the violation was a hostile act. Xuanzong apparently read the diplomatic signals correctly, because the marriage was a precursor to a united Tibetan-Türgish attack against the northwestern Tang Empire (Skaff 1998b, 168, n. 68). Sulu's ability to

create multiple allegiances by 734 provided the means to sever ties to Xuanzong at an opportune time.

Even when a tribal leader remained loyal to his master, his rivals for power could seek assistance from other patrons. Tang-Tuyuhun-Tibet relations demonstrate the need to project force to install and protect clients. Shortly after the Tang conquest of the Tuyuhun in Koko-nor in 635, Taizong invested Murong Shun as qaghan. Shun was a former Sui hostage who resented that a half-brother had become qaghan. The Tang conquest was Shun's opportunity to obtain the throne, but about six months later a rival Tuyuhun elite assassinated him. Taizong dispatched troops to "restore order" and invested Shun's son, Nuohebo, as qaghan. With Tang military aid, Nuohebo was able to suppress rival tribal factions and retain power. Nuohebo remained in control until he was ousted in 663 by a Tuyuhun clique allied with Tibet. Nuohebo fled to exile in Liangzhou with several thousand tents of followers, where he continued to render fidelity to Gaozong. The remaining Tuyuhun in Koko-nor became vassals of Tibet (JTS 198:5300; XTS 221a:6225-7; ZZTJ 194:6113, 6117, 201:6336; Beckwith 1987, 31; Molè 1970, 54-9). Gaozong initially did not intervene on behalf of Nuohebo, most likely because he was fully absorbed by efforts to conquer Koguryō from 660 to 668 (Graff 2002a, 145-56, 195-200; Pan 1997, 121-7, 210-22). By 669 the court was debating an invasion of Koko-nor, but the emperor decided against it because of a poor harvest and famine in the previous year (ZZTJ 201:6359). Gaozong ordered a major expedition in 670, but Tibetan forces delivered a stinging defeat to Tang troops (ZZTJ 201:6363-4; Beckwith 1987, 35-6). Nuohebo and his tribal adherents were allowed to migrate to distant Guanbei by 672, as described in the previous chapter. Gaozong apparently had abandoned the idea of raising an army to reinstall Nuohebo as ruler of the Koko-nor Tuyuhun. As a tribal group caught between two larger empires, members of the Tuyuhun elite who aspired to power sought the patronage of higher masters. The change of overlordship from Tang to Tibet signaled not only a diplomatic reorientation of the Koko-nor Tuyuhun, but also the rise of a new political elite.

A final illuminating case of multipolar relations involved the "Three Qarluq" tribes of the Altai Mountain region that lived on the periphery of the Türks, Western Türks, and Tang, and experienced subordination to each at different times over the course of a century (see chapter 1, Map 1.3). After the defeat of Helu of the Western Türks in 657, the Tang gained power over the Qarluq for the first time and established three bridle prefectures with their chiefs appointed as commanders-in-chief (XTS 43b:1130-2, 110:4119, 217b:6143; ZZTJ 200:6301; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 85-6, n. 4). Later, the Tang lost control as Qapaghan Qaghan of the Türks had become their suzerain by the 690s. When Qapaghan's rule began to falter, the Three Qarluq again offered fealty to the Tang in 714 (chapter 6). In 718 the new Türk leader, Bilgä Qaghan, reconquered the Qarluq and replaced the chiefs who had aligned themselves with the Tang (see chapter 1, Table 1.4). For the next two decades the Qarluq were outside of Tang suzerainty.



By the 740s and 750s the “Three Qarluq” may have developed diverging interests, similar to Tuyuhun factions. Some Qarluq were embroiled in Mongolian politics and others were involved in cooperation and conflict with the Tang in the Altai Mountains and Jungarian Basin. In Mongolia the Qarluq united with the Basmil and Uighur to overthrow the Second Türk Empire in 742. The Basmil ruler became the new qaghan of Mongolia and he invested the Qarluq and Uighur rulers as subordinate *yabghus*. Two years later the Uighur seized the khanate. The Basmil and Qarluq became outer “slave” tribes with Uighur governors supervising them. They had the hardship of serving in the vanguard on military campaigns. By the mid-740s these Qarluq had fled from Mongolia west to the Türgish, who in turn were under Tang suzerainty (Moriyasu 1999, 183; Katayama 1999, 171; Beckwith 1987, 126, n. 113; Golden 1992, 141).

Another faction of the Qarluq apparently previously had remained in the Altai and Jungarian Basin (see chapter 2, Map 2.1). The Tang court invested their leader with his indigenous title of *yabghu*. The Qarluq who fled from Mongolia in the mid-740s apparently were joining this *yabghu*.<sup>7</sup> Qarluq troops, serving on the famous Tang campaign against the Muslim Abbasid Caliphate at Talas in 751, turned on the Tang forces in the midst of battle, leading to the Tang defeat (see chapter 6, Map 6.1) (ZZTJ 216:6907; Beckwith 1987, 139). This does not seem to have harmed relations between the Tang and Qarluq because their *yabghus* sent two diplomatic missions to the Tang court in 752 (CFYG 971:18a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 84–5). The Qarluq’s cultivation of tighter relations with the Tang probably is connected to their unsuccessful efforts to ally with the Basmil and overthrow Uighur authority, which involved fierce warfare from 752 to 754 (Moriyasu 1999, 184–5; Kamalov 2003, 86–7). While warfare ensued, the Qarluq chiefs formally accepted appointment as Tang bridle officials in 753. The two sides grew closer after the Qarluq captured a fugitive Tang general of Turkic origin, Abuz Yabghu, in late 753 (JTS 187b:4903; XTS 193:5545; ZZTJ 216:6919; Kamalov 2003, 87). As a reward, the Qarluq *yabghu*, Tun Bilgä, was promoted to “Qaghan of the Türgish” and invested with the Tang noble title of commandery prince. Additional honors were given to 130 tribal leaders who travelled to the Tang court where they were appointed to official positions and granted remuneration. Supposedly, the emperor also agreed to all of their “special requests” (CFYG 965:5a–b, 971:18b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 86–7, n. 2). Nonetheless, the An Lushan rebellion of 755 caused the Qarluq to drift from Tang clientage once again. They migrated west to the region around Süyab and Talas in modern Kyrgyzstan and southeastern Kazakhstan (XTS 217b:6143; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 86, n. 4).

From the mid-seventh to mid-eighth centuries, different elements of the Qarluq pursued political opportunities and sought protection, migrating between the Mongolian plateau, the Altai Mountains, and regions to the south and west. As perils appeared or opportunities arose, the Qarluq *yabghus* continually adjusted their political-diplomatic orientations to become clients of new masters. Neither Tang



nor Turkic rulers could muster sufficient military or diplomatic leverage to retain the Qarluq as long-term clients. The Qarluq were relatively independent because of their mobility and distance from the great powers that competed for their services.

### III. Rituals of Severance

Despite the potential fragility of patron-client ties, an adherent's rebellion was regarded as a grave offense. Rulers reserved the right to ritually humiliate and punish a miscreant. Martial ceremonies denigrating disobedient vassals also served the purpose of flaunting the coercive might of a monarch.

Turkic martial rituals are poorly understood, but the Türks apparently believed that slain enemies, including rebellious clients, became the supernatural possessions of the slayer or members of his family. Chinese sources, describing Turkic funerary customs, mention the practice of erecting one stone for each enemy killed in battle at the tomb of the deceased (ZS 50:910; BS 99:3288; SS 84:1864; TD 197:5404; Ecsedy 1984, 280). Archaeological surveys demonstrate that the stones were placed in a straight line directly to the east of the tomb, sometimes veering in another direction in the distance (Erdélyi et al. 2000, pls. 65, 66, 79; Jisl 1997, 64, 69; Kljastornyj and Livsic 1972, 69, 95). Most scholars concur that a stone representing a dead enemy corresponds to a *balbal*. The Turkic inscriptions of the second empire describe the tribal elite erecting *balbals* to honor themselves or deceased relatives (Jisl 1997, 61–71; Hayashi 2000, 222–4). For example, around 710, during Qapaghan Qaghan's reign, his nephews Bilgä Qaghan and Kül Tegin led an army that suppressed a Kirghiz rebellion and killed their qaghan. Just after Bilgä succeeded his uncle, he “erected the Kirghiz Qaghan as a *balbal*” for Qapaghan (Jisl 1997, 64; Tekin 1968, 269, 266, 276). Spiritually, Bilgä's offering of a rebel client's *balbal* to his recently deceased uncle appears to be a type of ancestor worship. Secularly, the gift burnished his reputation as a warrior who was vengeful toward enemies and generous toward friends. *Balbals* displayed the martial prowess of the killer and his lineage, and served warning to clients who might be contemplating revolt.

The Chinese tradition lacked the custom of erecting a *balbal*, but ritual executions of rebel leaders were carried out, with outer clients a conspicuous component of the audience. For example, after the suppression of the “Lanchi Hu” and Tangut bridle tribe revolt in 721, the leader, Kang Daibin, was captured alive and delivered to Chang'an. Xuanzong ordered the “chiefs of the four barbarians” to watch Kang cut in half at the waist in the Western Market (JTS 93:2985–9; XTS 111:4153–6; ZZTJ 212:6745–6). As Peter Perdue (2005, 206) notes, the executions of captured enemies were “highly conspicuous performances by which the dynasty displayed its power and authority.” Xuanzong evidently considered bridle chiefs to be the most important witnesses to “performances” in which capital punishment was applied to rebellious outer clients.

The execution of a war captive was the final step of the triumph, the Tang's most festive and visible martial ritual. Common from the early to mid-Tang, the ceremony involved the victorious general bringing captives back to the capital. The most prized prisoners were foreign monarchs, including rebellious outer clients. Although most historical accounts downplay the presentation of prisoners because of the anti-military bias of the literati Confucian authors, the grand processions through the capital created a public spectacle.<sup>8</sup> The archetypal parade consisted of two military bands playing martial music in the vanguard, the victorious general dressed in "barbarian garb" mounted on a horse, members of his army, and the captives in the rear. The train of people proceeded to the imperial palace and then the Ancestral Temple. Before an assembly of civil and military officials and "barbarian monarchs" the emperor announced victory to his forebears, reviewed and rewarded the troops, and then treated them to a banquet (THY 14:320–3; Schafer 1963, 40–2). The ritual presentation of prisoners to the spirits of the deceased was an ancient Eastern Zhou practice related to royal ancestor worship (Lewis 1990, 22–7). The Tang triumphs seem to be functionally comparable to those of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, which "celebrated and confirmed the victorious rulership of the emperor" and included foreign ambassadors as witnesses (McCormick 1986, 5–6; Canepa 2009, 170–2). The proffering of captives at the Imperial Ancestral Temple distinguished Chinese triumphs from those of the west.

An unusual and important case of a rebellious client involved Ashina Helu, the above-mentioned qaghan of the Western Türks who revolted after Taizong's death. Helu is reputed to have made the following request after his capture:

I am a defeated and ruined war captive, that's it! The former emperor [Taizong] treated me generously, but I betrayed him. In my present defeat, Heaven has vented its fury at me. In the past I have heard that Han law stipulates that executions of men be carried out in the city marketplace. When we arrive in the capital, I request to go to Zhaoling [Taizong's tomb to be executed] to atone for my crimes to the former emperor. This is my sincere desire.<sup>9</sup>

Helu's ethical and spiritual orientation reflects tendencies discussed in previous chapters. In his mind, his crime was the betrayal of a generous patrimonial master, and attributed his downfall to Heaven-sent retribution. Through his previous interactions with the Tang Empire, he was familiar with elements of its law. Most interestingly, his request to be executed as a war captive at the tomb of the deceased monarch may be related to the Turkic practice of offerings *balbals* to the dead.

Gaozong was pleased to hear of the request and discussed it with his ritual experts. Xu Jingzong mentioned that in ancient times triumphant armies would return to the Ancestral Temple, but he had never heard of the presentation of

captives at an imperial tomb. Nonetheless, Xu opined that this modification to the rite was acceptable, as long as a second presentation of the captive took place at the Ancestral Temple, because Gaozong's filial devotion toward his deceased father was in keeping with the spirit of Confucian ritual. Gaozong decided to follow Xu's advice. Helu was delivered to Taizong's tomb in the outskirts of the capital, where Gaozong benevolently spared the rebellious client. The procession thereafter continued in the traditional manner, arriving two days later at the Ancestral Temple. The stop at Zhaoling was repeated at least one other time in Gaozong's reign after conquest of Koguryō in 666 (XTS 215b:6063; THY 14:320–1; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 66).<sup>10</sup> Thus, Gaozong's two greatest military victories—over the Western Türks and Koguryō—culminated in triumphs that included stops at his father's tomb. The idea for this innovation originated with a rebellious Turkic client.

The incident is a fascinating display of simultaneous kingship in which Gaozong played the role of cultural broker between a Türk warrior and a Confucian ritual expert. Gaozong was receptive to Helu's request because a former Türk qaghan offering submission according to his own customs would further legitimize Tang rule over Turko-Mongol peoples and more generally contribute to imperial glorification. On the other hand, Gaozong had to consider the wishes of his Confucian bureaucrats, so he agreed to Xu Jingzong's proposal to perform a second presentation of the captive at the Ancestral Temple. The compromise was possible partly because the emperor had an interest in appealing to all constituencies in his multi-ethnic empire, but also because the distance between the Tang and Turkic traditions was not so great. Both cultures shared the notion that war captives should be proffered to ancestral spirits of rulers—probably related to the common belief in ancestor worship—but disagreed on whether the location should be a temple or tomb. Gaozong was willing to combine Confucian and Turkic practices because he sought to rule a pluralistic empire. The ritual innovation allowed him simultaneously to project an image of being a Confucian filial son and martial dominator of rebellious subjects. Ironically, this led to the unwitting revival of previously rejected Chinese practice because the presentation of war captives at the tomb echoed a Shang Dynasty ceremony that was abandoned in Eastern Zhou times.<sup>11</sup>

The sparing of Helu's life was not unusual, even though Tang law considered defeated monarchs and generals to be "rebels" liable for decapitation. In many cases emperors displayed benevolence by pardoning prominent war captives, appointing them to official positions, and allowing them to live out their days as privileged prisoners under house arrest. Illig Qaghan of the First Türk Empire is an example. Taizong appointed him general-in-chief of the Right Guard and awarded him a fine estate (JTS 194a:5160; XTS 215a:6036; ZZTJ 193:6099). Illig became a member of the Tang "political family" who nominally was equal to any other civil or military official. Symbolically, Illig was a living war trophy emblematic of Taizong's marital power and patrimonial benevolence.

Even when elite captives were unhappy with their circumstances, Taizong and Gaozong were able to find political advantage. As mentioned in chapter 2, Illig Qaghan passed away after several years of melancholy and an incident in which Taizong had humiliated him. Taizong, supposedly feeling remorse, ordered that Illig be buried on the bank of the Ba River that formed the eastern border of the private imperial park north of Chang'an (JTS 38:1394; Xiong 2000, 57–8). The Turks carried out a ceremony cremating the body and burying the remains under a tumulus. Illig's close client, Hulu Tarqan, committed suicide to follow his master in death. Taizong admired Hulu Tarqan's loyalty and ordered that he be given a satellite tomb mound next to Illig with an epitaph praising his deeds. A quarter century later, Ashina Helu was too proud to accept Gaozong's mercy and committed suicide one year after his capture. After Helu's death Gaozong ordered that he be given an honorable burial next to Illig with a stele memorializing his achievements (JTS 194a:5160, 194b:5187; XTS 215a:6036, 215b:6063; ZZTJ 193:6105, 200:6311; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 38, 71). The tumuli of the two defeated qaghans and the loyal client Hulu, standing just outside of the imperial park, served simultaneously as Tang war trophies and symbols of imperial generosity and respect. The tomb mounds might have been visible to those who accompanied Tang emperors on hunts in the park. In death, the unhappy vanquished qaghans had been transformed into honored clients of outstanding talent, whose shared fault was an inability to withstand the might of the Tang.

## Conclusion

Literati Confucian and Türk rhetoric blamed their political conflicts on intrinsic incompatibility. In contrast, this chapter argues that volatility inherent to the steppe natural environment, and domestic and interstate patrimonial politics better explain the rifts endemic to relations between patrons and their outer clients. Agreements existed between individuals and not institutions, so relationships were vulnerable to interpersonal friction, opportunism, failure to fulfill customary duties or obligations, or death of a patron or client. Factors influencing the likelihood of breakups between rulers and outer clients included distance, weather, internal political instability, size of following, and existence of multipolar competition. Adherents who were further from their patrons were more likely to revolt, especially during unsettled situations, such as civil war or natural disasters. As a result, outer clients, such as Turko-Mongol chiefs or Han Chinese warlords, were more prone to disloyalty, not because of defects in temperament, but because of their distance from centers of power in fluid, multipolar political environments.<sup>12</sup> The only truly distinctive feature of pastoral nomadic revolts was mobility. Turko-Mongol outer clients were more likely to successfully break ties with a formidable patron because they could readily transport their families and possessions to seek new masters.

Although contingent interpersonal conflicts and weather calamities might incite unrest among bridle tribes, these factors did not deterministically lead to the severing of ties. Sui-Tang and pastoral nomadic leaders often had the capacity to quell disturbances through diplomatic or military means. Patrons in China and Inner Asia who forcibly reasserted power over rebel clients imposed ritual sanctions ranging from public humiliation to death. Tang and Turkic rituals transformed captured or dead clients into trophies who forever served their masters to warn anyone contemplating rebellion. The compulsion to retain clients in the afterlife, like surname bestowal discussed in chapter 7, may indicate a desire for supernatural aid to deal with elements of politics that were beyond the scope of human intervention.

## Beyond the Silk Roads

Sui-Tang China's relations with Turko-Mongols and other inhabitants of Eurasia have long been misunderstood. The origins of the misconceptions can be traced to the ideology of Confucian authors who downplayed the significance of foreign peoples, and perpetuated an image of the Middle Kingdom as a civilizational beacon to admirers throughout All under Heaven. However, buried within their narratives of foreign relations are scattered shards of countervailing evidence that the author of this book has mined and presented in comparative context. The book provides new insights into the cultures of the Sui-Tang and Turkic empires, the Eastern Eurasian balance of power, and China's connections with its Turko-Mongol neighbors and the rest of Eurasia. These major insights will be reviewed in turn below.

### I. Culture

Cultural uniformities lubricated diplomatic relations between Sui-Tang, Turko-Mongol, and other Eurasian monarchs. Uniformities were widely shared, foundational “conceptual structures”—to borrow Geertz's term (1973, 10, 27)—that set the parameters of social discourse. Though medieval Eurasian peoples perceived their societies to be unique, they spun overlapping and entangled webs of culture that shared many strands. Uniformities might be envisioned as the common, foundational warp threads around which people wove and reweave their distinctive designs. Throughout medieval Eurasia most monarchs claimed universal kingship, which was heaven-mandated in Eastern Eurasia, and competed symbolically with diplomacy involving elaborate displays of pageantry, status ranking, obeisance, gift exchanges, and feasting. Bilateral negotiations usually involved efforts to forge reciprocally amenable patron-client relationships that signaled peace. Agreements were sealed with regalia bestowed upon clients. Luxurious versions of the caftan and belt served as both the most common contemporary norm of formal wear and

symbols of investiture and subservience. Oaths and/or hostage exchanges may have been another uniform element of agreements, but evidence is too sporadic to be certain. The two parties also might address additional domestic or foreign policy needs through marital or fictive kinship, trade relations, subsidies, and/or military operations against mutual enemies. Failure to strike a bargain left both parties in a state of wary or active hostility.

Four deep-seated, uniform, patrimonial sociopolitical elements informed the diplomatic patterns of Eurasia. The first was the acceptance of status ranking and the necessity of putting people in their “proper place” in a political hierarchy of patrons and clients. The second was a related urge to publicly broadcast the status of individuals. This could be expressed in rituals that displayed participants in ranked order or prestige goods that marked a person as an honored client of an eminent patron. The third was a tendency to bring the client symbolically into the patron’s household. Feasting was the most common expression of this tendency. A monarch also cared for the physical needs of clients with economic and military assistance. In return, the client provided varied services for the master. In some cases, bonds of marital or fictive kinship relations brought the pair even closer. The fourth element was an assumption that allegiances were personal, and contingent on both parties honoring their mutual commitments. Diplomatic relationships and rituals were acted out within the framework of these widely shared conceptual parameters, which perhaps should be considered to be the dominant medieval sociopolitical mindset. Consequently, medieval Eurasian diplomacy reflects the capriciousness and instability of contemporary domestic patrimonial politics. Patrimonial political culture still persists vestigially in many parts of the modern world, but Enlightenment values stressing equality and sovereignty—ironically disseminated globally as an accompaniment to Western military and economic dominance—have reshaped current norms of international diplomacy (Burbank and Cooper 2010).

More specific to relations between China and Inner Asia, shared culture engendered common approaches to the “soft power” of diplomacy and the “hard power” of warfare. Turko-Mongol rulers developed military and diplomatic strategies that showed familiarity with the ways of China, such as the successful Khitan ambush of Tang forces described in chapter 4. Moreover, qaghans apparently exerted influences on Sui-Tang approaches to diplomacy. For example, the prominent place of marriage negotiations in bilateral relations apparently was a Sui-Tang concession to Turko-Mongol domestic political needs. The cosmopolitan Sui-Tang empires also attracted outsiders who—rather than being “sinicized” or totally assimilated—fashioned bicultural identities and provided expertise in military, diplomatic, and administrative affairs—not just art and music. As I demonstrate elsewhere, Tang military forces utilized tactics demonstrating familiarity with Turko-Mongol warfare (Skaff 2009b). Even Sui-Tang rituals felt the impact of Inner Asia as Sui Yangdi and Tang Taizong created rites mimicking Turko-Mongol accession ceremonies, and Tang Gaozong devised a hybrid ritual for war captives.



Both sides favored a cosmopolitan style of patrimonial networking that drew clients of diverse backgrounds into affiliation and placed emphasis on personal allegiances of clients to their patron. Marriages and fictive kinship played a secondary role in reinforcing these political bonds. Ethnicity was not a major factor. These findings support the position of scholars of Inner Asia who have argued that personal loyalties to political leaders, rather than kinship, were the main binding forces of Turko-Mongol polities (Lindner 1982; Sneath 2007). Moreover, Sui-Tang rulers, whose lineages had great prestige throughout Eastern Eurasia, successfully competed to win the allegiances of Turko-Mongol tribes and tribal unions. Sui-Tang emperors mirrored Turko-Mongol qaghans in accommodating client tribes by providing financial and status rewards to the indigenous leadership, opportunities for male warriors to fight for profit, and pasture and military protection to the entire populace.

Sui-Tang emperors are notable for a greater willingness to make cultural concessions to Turko-Mongol elites, like marriages, than material ones, such as large payments of wealth. Sui-Tang rulers either avoided high monetary payments or regarded them as dishonorable, which is why Taizong called his deal with Illig Qaghan in 626 the “Humiliation on the Wei River.” Even after the An Lushan rebellion, Tang emperors insisted on disguising transfers of wealth to the Uighur Empire as lavish dowries or premium prices of horses. Song rulers, who made greater efforts to distinguish themselves ethnically from monarchs to the north, present a fascinating contrast in values. For example, in 1042 the Song court decided to increase subsidies to the Liao Dynasty in lieu of honoring the Khitan emperor’s proposal to marry a Song bride (Tao 1988, 60–2). Song rulers apparently considered an undisguised payment to be more honorable than interethnic marriage relations. Though the Sui, Tang, and Song imperial houses identified themselves as Han inhabitants of a civilized Middle Kingdom, the Sui-Tang imperial self-image was more cosmopolitan than the Song’s. One noticeable consequence was that Sui-Tang foreign policy preferences resemble those of Turko-Mongols more than those of the Song.

## II. Power

The wide acceptance of interstate bonding in the guise of formal patron-client ties was reinforced by the common structural challenges premodern states faced on their perimeters, especially when expanding into sparsely populated areas like Inner Asia. Given contemporary limitations on transportation, communications, and organizational capacities, imperial growth could be achieved more rapidly and cheaply by gaining outer clients than by conquest and direct territorial rule. As Richard Tapper (1997, 344) has noted in the case of the tribes of premodern Iran, rulers sought to “conquer and control people, not territory” because land was “useless without people to exploit and defend it.” Even later European colonizers in

many cases found that they had to rely on indirect rule of clients rather than direct legal-bureaucratic governance (Hansen and Stepputat 2006, 304; Newbury 2003). In the borderlands of patrimonial or patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, where the coercive powers of rulers and their armies grew feeble, the most efficient and culturally acceptable means of expansion was via personalistic patron-client ties in the idiom of formal investiture or appointment.

Shared political culture and structural challenges shaped the general parameters of interstate communications and conflict, but did not determine specific outcomes of negotiations or warfare. This book has focused particularly on the bilateral contest for supremacy between the Sui-Tang empires and Turkic khanates of the Mongolian plateau. The political needs of negotiating partners and multilateral balance of power shaped the terms of interstate agreements, each of which involved differing provisions related to investiture, fictive or marital kinship, economic relations, and/or war alliances. The resulting pacts tended to be unstable—frequently renegotiated or severed in heated conflicts—due to the dynamism of domestic and interstate politics or instability in the environment. These proximate political and environmental factors caused short-term fluctuations in the balance of power.

A geographic factor, control of the China-Inner Asia borderlands, influenced long-term trends in power relations. This region served as strategically important staging grounds for either Turkic raids southward on the Chinese heartland or Sui-Tang expeditions northward into Inner Asia. Keys to military success were control of the water, pasture, and pastoral nomadic tribes in the extensive zone, north of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall, where the grasslands of Hexi and Inner Mongolia gradually merge into the Gobi desert. When Turkic cavalry could travel southward from Mongolia through the parched Gobi Desert and enter the Inner Mongolian steppe unimpeded, their horses could be rested, fed, and watered to prepare for attacks on China. On the other hand, when the Sui and Tang garrisoned strategic points in the China-Inner Asia borderlands and held the allegiances of pastoral nomads of the region, invading Turkic armies were easily repulsed. Moreover, control of these borderlands facilitated expansion into Inner Asia. The grasslands supported state-run breeding ranches and Turko-Mongol tribes, which supplied Sui-Tang garrisons and expeditionary armies with quality mounts and skilled cavalry warriors.

Part of the battle of supremacy between Sui-Tang emperors and Turkic qaghans involved a competition for loyalties of Turko-Mongols in the China-Inner Asia borderlands. From the perspectives of the client tribal leaders, a top priority was to garner a patron's assistance against external threats and internal challengers. The political survival of any Turko-Mongol chief was enhanced by the ability to successfully negotiate an effective mix of strategic, symbolic, and economic concessions from a powerful patron based in China, Mongolia, Tibet, or elsewhere. Clients welcomed material rewards and symbolic recognition of their status and authority—via investiture and/or fictive and affinal kinship—in order to discourage internal challenges to power. Access to good grassland and profits from trade or military

service also were necessary to satisfy their adherents. Turkic rulers of Mongolia had the most grassland to provide. On the other hand, Sui-Tang emperors offered two benefits that Turkic ones could not, which were guarantees of inheritance rights for chiefs' eldest sons and more opportunities to sell livestock. The client tribespeople served a Tang Heavenly Qaghan as they would a Turkic one, providing soldiers and horses for warfare and desisting from raiding their patron's other subjects. Indigenous elites and their descendants could maintain status over a number of generations as long as they retained their adherents. Delivery of military victory or diplomatic success was the path to upward sociopolitical mobility. Ultimately, to paraphrase Chairman Mao, power grew from the pull of a bowstring. Patron rulers in Sui-Tang China and Turkic Mongolia had to be prepared to send military assistance to client chiefs who were under threat from internal rivals or external enemies, which in turn required a capacity to mobilize the resources and manpower needed to launch military campaigns.

Whichever great power controlled the China-Inner Asia borderlands held the dominant hand in Eastern Eurasian warfare and diplomatic negotiations. All Sui to mid-Tang rulers with effective foreign policies garrisoned Inner Mongolia and retained the loyalty of tribes there. Tang expansion mainly occurred while Turko-Mongol tribal unions were under the highly effective patrimonial governance of the emperors Taizong and Gaozong. On the other hand, the heaviest attacks on North China occurred when the Türks exercised authority over Inner Mongolia during the reigns of Sui Yangdi, Tang Gaozu, and Empress Wu. The Türk qaghans Illig, Ilterish, and Qapaghan successfully plundered North China with the willing cooperation of subordinate tribes. Interestingly, Xuanzong and Bilgä Qaghan both experienced mixed success in winning the allegiance of borderland tribes, including a virtual stalemate involving the Khitan and Qay. This explains their military and diplomatic standoff that ultimately led to their horse-silk trade agreement of 727.

Turko-Mongol politics on the peripheries of Sui-Tang, Turkic, or other empires always had high potential for volatility. The mobility intrinsic to the pastoral nomadic lifestyle gave individual tribes more opportunities to strategically shift their locations and/or allegiances back and forth between China, Mongolia, Tibet, or elsewhere. Moreover, there was a high probability of political instability in the long run because the pastoral nomadic economy and sociopolitical organization were vulnerable to periodic disruptions. Weather calamities could spark starvation, rebellion, and mutual pillage. Moreover, patrimonial politics continually produced seeds of volatility. Social friction between individuals, such as personality clashes or jealousy, could give rise to political intrigue or military conflict. Factionalism was common as political actors, bound together in competing patron-client alliances, fought literally or figuratively for the spoils of power. The death of a Sui, Tang, or Turkic ruler removed the unifying object of loyalty and might spark a scramble among client chiefs to locate new patrons and prepare for war. Even when stable successions occurred, the heir had to win the trust of his father's clients or quickly

replace them with his own trusted subordinates. The political instability of succession was particularly severe in the Turkic empires, but Sui-Tang rulers were equally bedeviled by human and weather-related disruptions that could sever allegiances of outer tribes.

From the perspective of the Chinese heartland, geostrategy toward Mongolia and Inner Mongolia was the art of human relations and science of government, involving three interlocking factors that can be visualized as an Inner Mongolian stool with three legs: 1) the ability to mobilize resources and manpower of the empire, 2) the garrisoning of strategic points in Inner Mongolia with troops capable of mobile cavalry counterstrikes, and 3) the patrimonial control of pastoral nomadic clients who contributed mounted archers to imperial defenses. Inattention to any of the three legs weakened the ability to maintain the other two, causing the stool to tip over—in other words the fall of Inner Mongolia, leading to raids or diplomatic concessions. For example, when Sui Yangdi—distracted by failed campaigns to conquer Koguryō—alienated his client in Inner Mongolia, Shibi Qaghan, Türk raiding commenced and Sui garrisons were abandoned. In a contrasting case, when Tang Zhongzong reestablished garrisons north of the Yellow River that had been relinquished under Empress Wu, the Tang prevented further Türk attacks and regained loyalties of Inner Mongolian tribes. Nonetheless, even under the most effective rulers, contingencies could arise to upset the three-legged system. For example, Empress Wu's problems in foreign affairs can be traced back to harsh winter weather in Inner Mongolia that sparked the Türk revolts in the late 670s and early 680s. Later, the An Lushan rebellion ended the Tang's capacity to mobilize the resources and manpower to garrison Inner Mongolia. The relationship with Mongolia moved into a new phase in which the Tang purchased protection from the Uighur Empire via marriages, dowries, and premium horse prices. Maintaining the three legs had high rewards, but was never an easy proposition in a large empire with many competing priorities.

The most striking example in Chinese history of the failure to maintain the three interlocking factors was the Ming Dynasty's Great Wall. After initially reestablishing part of the Yuan Dynasty (and Sui-Tang) garrison system in Inner Mongolia, the Ming ceded the territory to the Chahar Mongols in the early fifteenth century in part because the Ming had difficulty procuring grain locally to feed the soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, in the sixteenth century the Ming expended its resources on building the Great Wall on the southern edge of Inner Mongolia. Despite its fame, the wall proved to be an ineffective barrier due to a lack of cavalry mounts to carry out counterstrikes. The Ming could not raise horses because borderland pastures were outside of the Great Wall in Inner Mongolia. The Ming finally purchased protection by agreeing to trade relations with the Chahar Mongols (Perdue 2005, 60-6; Waldron 1990, 140-87). Not even the Great Wall could effectively defend the Ming's northern borders because of lack of access to Inner Mongolian grasslands, horses, and Turko-Mongol tribes. The failure of the Ming to establish

garrisons with effective mobile counterstrike capabilities and exercise patrimonial rule over indigenous pastoral nomads led to regular Mongol raids. In contrast, Sui-Tang garrisons were far to the north of the Ming Great Wall, outside the northern loop of the Yellow River, commanding the grasslands and tribes of central Inner Mongolia.

### III. Connections

If medieval Eurasian diplomatic rituals occurred within common, patrimonial conceptual parameters—what might explain these uniformities? Are we dealing with 1) universals arising from the shared social psychology of the human species, 2) similar reactions to the common challenges of creating large-scale sociopolitical organizations, or 3) multiple independent traditions that converged due to interactions? Scholars have pondered and debated these potential causes from the eighteenth century onward (Mazlish 2005, 18-28; Teggart [1941] 1977, 99-127).<sup>2</sup> All three factors probably were involved to varying degrees throughout history. Even though this book, focusing on the medieval time period, cannot resolve this debate, it does illustrate the role of cross-cultural entanglements in perpetuating ancient uniformities and spawning new ones. Customary medieval norms of interstate relations were mutually recognized, creating a common grammar of diplomatic conversations from China to Byzantium. Moreover, diplomatic interactions generated new phenomena, such as the widespread adoption of the caftan and belt as symbols of investiture, and new participants in Eurasian political discourse, such as Japan in the fifth through seventh centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The conventional portrayals of outside influences on the Sui and Tang empires—Silk Road connections and the partial Inner Asian descent of the ruling houses—overlook the full spectrum of interactions and mutual influences. The ancestry of the Sui-Tang emperors predisposed them to dealing with Inner Asians, but the ongoing movements of Turko-Mongol tribes in and out of the Sui-Tang empires had a repeated impact on Eastern Eurasian society and politics. Continual interactions between China and the Inner Asian steppe reinforced the sharing of political and military culture as much or more than the Silk Roads. These mutual influences were not unidirectional emanations from China, as conceived by the “Chinese worldview.”

To fully appreciate the complex and multifaceted nature of premodern intercultural entanglements, we need to move “beyond the Silk Roads” by systematically analyzing: 1) agents of cultural transmission, 2) networks of exchange with attention to their scope, frequency, and causes of operation and 3) recipients of alien culture and their reasons for acceptance, reformulation, or rejection.<sup>4</sup> The discussion below will apply this model of cultural exchange to the evidence detailed in this book.

## A. Agents

A number of different agents of cultural transmission, who typically were mobile people shuttling willingly and unwillingly between China and Inner Asia, have been mentioned in the preceding chapters. Elite and influential agents have been noted more frequently than lower-class ones because activities of the latter are given cursory attention in the sources. Nonetheless, a number of types of plebeian agents have been mentioned in passing throughout the book. The China-Inner Asia borderlands harbored translators, cultural brokers, and common herding families living under the authority of their chiefs. Turko-Mongol domestic slaves were sold in China, while peasant women and children from rural North China, who were kidnapped by Türk raiding parties, carried cultural knowledge to the steppe. Common people of various ethnicities who interacted in the borderlands facilitated the sharing of ideas and norms locally, while mobile tribes and captive slaves transported popular culture over longer distances. The impact of common people and slaves is easily underestimated, but may help to explain similarities in cultural phenomena such as Eastern Eurasian ancestor worship.

Elite agents and their impact on political culture play a more prominent role in the preceding chapters, reflecting their greater visibility in extant textual sources and archaeological evidence. In addition to the obvious case of envoys shuttling between courts, diplomatic agents took on a number of guises. Turko-Mongol hostages and imperial guardsmen—serving as sureties guaranteeing diplomatic pacts—bore their native culture to the Sui-Tang capitals and sometimes returned to the steppe with knowledge of China. Elite Sui-Tang women—married to Turko-Mongol rulers to cement bilateral relations—at times became directly involved in foreign policy activities and in all cases must have added to the cosmopolitanism of the qaghanal courts. Some elites moved between courts as private individuals seeking opportunities to serve as administrators and advisors. For example, Turko-Mongol rulers attracted Sogdian and Han Chinese courtiers. Moving in the reverse direction, Turko-Mongol chiefs who rendered allegiance to the Sui-Tang empires, such as Qibi Heli, became agents transferring knowledge about steppe society, culture, politics, and warfare. Elites served as bearers of high culture and in some cases literacy in numerous languages. The activities of these agents help to explain shared approaches to court ritual, interstate negotiations, and warfare in Eastern Eurasia.

## B. Circulation

The Silk Roads model inadequately explains the movements of the above-mentioned agents of cultural transmission. Silk Roads, oriented to the east and west, undeniably had importance for long-distance transfer of luxury goods, religious ideas, artistic motifs, and technologies associated with agricultural and urban economies. Nonetheless, the east-west routes played a lesser role than north-south ones



in the diplomatic, military, cultural, and economic exchanges between China and the Turko-Mongol dwellers of the Eastern Eurasian steppe. Spatially, Eurasian networks of exchange, like Eurasian culture, are better visualized as overlapping webs. Major trunk routes, radiating in the cardinal directions from various capitals, intersected at nodal sites with numerous branch lines. All roads of each web ultimately led to the imperial center, the seat of medieval political, economic, and cultural power.

Overreliance on the Silk Roads model also has led to an underestimation of the role of interstate competition, especially involving mobile pastoral nomads, in medieval Eurasian cultural exchanges. The contests for power between various Turko-Mongol khanates, Sui-Tang China, Tibet, and West Asian empires accelerated the circulation of individuals and tribes between the Mongolian Plateau, North China, Manchuria, the Tibetan Plateau, and West Asia. A byproduct of heightened interstate competition probably was increased diplomatic exchanges involving envoys, brides, hostages, and guardsmen traveling between courts. Domestic political instability also encouraged elites and their adherents to move between states in search of new patrons. Losers in political and military competition customarily sought asylum and employment with new protectors.

In the particular case of North China and Turkic Mongolia, increased movements of people were directly related to high-stakes diplomacy and warfare during the heyday of medieval competition from the late sixth to mid-eighth centuries. Episodes of political transition and warfare in North China in 577 and 581 and from 615 to 623 resulted in the willing and unwilling movement of peoples of various ethnicities northward to live under Türk suzerainty in Inner Mongolia and Mongolia. Thereafter, other significant population transfers occurred during the period of conflict between Empress Wu and Qapaghan Qaghan, from 690 to 705. In one case the empress agreed to transfer “Türk” inhabitants of the Ordos region to the Second Türk Empire. On other occasions Türk raiding parties captured women and children in North China to take to Mongolia. The impact of these multiethnic inhabitants of North China on Turkic society is difficult to gauge. The most intriguing indication of North China’s influence on the Turkic khanates may be the Chinese elements of the bilingual and bicultural Türk imperial titles detailed in chapter 4.

Episodic circulation of Turko-Mongol pastoralists apparently played an even greater role in inducing exchanges of people and ideas between distant places. Differing from regular seasonal migrations of pastoral nomads, episodic tribal circulation involved elites and their adherents fleeing long distances between states in North China, Mongolia, Manchuria, the Tibetan Plateau, or West Asia. Turko-Mongol polities were inherently susceptible to breakdowns caused by episodic environmental calamities and patrimonial political conflicts, especially related to unclear succession rules. The intense interstate conflicts in the seventh and eighth centuries accelerated intermittent movements of tribes. The most significant cases of episodic tribal circulation in medieval Eastern Eurasia involved the Qarluq and



royal tribes of the Türks and Uighur. Elements of the Qarluq moved back and forth between Mongolian Plateau and the Tang Empire's northwestern periphery, and migrated to West Asia in the late eighth century. Even more important to Eastern Eurasian history was the circulation of Türk and Uighur tribes between the Mongolian Plateau and North China. The submission of Qimin Qaghan and his followers to Sui Wendi in Inner Mongolia in 599 began to draw Türks into the periphery of China. When the Taizong defeated the Türks in 630 and incorporated their tribes into the Tang Empire, the association deepened. Meanwhile, the Uighur remained in Mongolia and gained command over the Tiele tribal union. When many Türks revolted against the Tang in the 680s and retook Mongolia, the Uighur and some other former Tiele tribes, now reconstituted as the Toghuz-Oghuz tribal union, retreated southward to the Tang Empire's borderlands. The Uighur later returned northward and regained control of Mongolia by 744. Essentially, the inner tribes of the Türks and Uighur periodically switched locations with each other. The leadership of both royal tribes apparently preferred to render allegiance to the Tang rather than to each other.

While it often has been noted that pastoral nomads had a tendency to migrate from eastern to western Eurasia (Czeglédy 1983), the circulation of Turko-Mongols discontinuously between the Mongolian Plateau and North China has not received sufficient recognition. Mobility over long distances during crises was enabled by a pastoral lifestyle and driven by desperation. The ruling stratum of medieval Mongolian society—generally alternating between Türks and Uighur—had intimate experience with the Tang court from the late seventh to eighth centuries. Many tribal commoners in Mongolia also must have had some familiarity with the sedentary society of North China's borderlands. Episodic tribal circulation appears to have knit and reknit the web of Eurasian cultural connections.

Empire building is another contributor to the circulation of agents that has been underestimated. The Sui-Tang, Turkic, and other medieval empires were fluid constructions. Episodes of expansion and contraction resulted in periodic reconfigurations of political space and the remixing of people living therein. Conquerors generally did not impose their cultures upon the conquered. Instead conquerors and conquered exerted mutual influences that contributed to the "entangled histories" of China and Inner Asia.

While it is accepted that outside conquerors of China, such as Sārbi, Mongols, and Manchus, had an impact on Chinese governance and culture, the effects of outward imperial expansion have been overlooked. When the Sui and Tang empires conquered parts of the China-Inner Asia borderlands, Turko-Mongol agents of cultural transmission became more numerous, active, and influential in North China. Tribes living on the grasslands of the borderlands made recurring seasonal visits to garrisons and oasis towns, which connected them to the wider imperial communications network and must have stimulated local commerce and exchanges of popular culture. Borderland Turko-Mongols also had an impact on the Chinese heartland.

Important tribal elites traveled periodically to the Sui-Tang capitals, but even chiefs and tribespeople who never visited the interior could exert indirect influence through their interactions with Sui-Tang frontier military personnel. When regular army officers stationed in the borderlands periodically visited the court or were reassigned to duties in the capital, they carried their knowledge of borderland affairs to the emperor and others in government. Some frontier military officials, such as Niu Xianke, even rose to prominent positions as grand councilor, the most prestigious imperial advisor. Nonetheless, the contributions of Turko-Mongol imperial subjects have been underestimated in part because Sui-Tang literati Confucians perennially criticized bridle tribe elites for their propensity to literally and figuratively seek greener pastures under rival rulers.

### C. Receptivity

Contacts, conflicts, and population exchanges driven by economic and strategic concerns created opportunities for the sharing of military and political culture. However, this does not explain why cultural transmission and innovation occurred. The needs of rulers to maintain or expand power is the most common explanation for their receptivity to new ideas. In particular, the concept of “competitive emulation” has been proposed to describe the propensity of political elites to adopt culture from rival “peer polities” (Renfrew 1986, 2–8). This model has been applied to other cases of medieval Eurasian history including the shared hunting rituals of pre-modern courts (Allsen 2006, 268) and Japan’s adoption of norms of politics and diplomacy in the fifth through seventh centuries (Piggott 1997, 79–99, 131–61). Although competitive emulation, and its connection to power, appears to be particularly useful for understanding convergences in the realms of warfare, ideology, and diplomatic ritual, it does not explain all of the phenomena discussed in this book because it underestimates the 1) potential of elite interactions to produce innovations as rulers attempted to distinguish themselves from competitors, 2) involvement of actors outside of the state system, especially in borderlands, and 3) variations in receptivity to alien culture. Each of the three points will be treated in turn below. In general, it is important to note that ideas, material culture, or technologies normally do not “diffuse” unchanged across space and time, but people selectively appropriate available items and modify them to suit their needs and tastes (Allsen 2001, 189–95; Canepa 2010a).

Regarding the first point, the most striking evidence of creativity arising from interstate rivalry concerns the syncretic ideological battles over universal kingship detailed in chapter 4, which involved Sui-Tang emperors, Turkic qaghans, and borderland warlords. The most famous is Tang Taizong’s “Heavenly Qaghan” title. A byproduct of peer polity interactions, these unique epithets drew from a repertoire of ideas shared throughout Eastern Eurasia. However, rulers placed more emphasis on creative one-upmanship than imitation in order to meet their particular

ideological needs. Canepa (2009, 2–3, 401), noting a similar phenomenon in artistic and ritual competition between the Roman and Sasanian empires, has coined the term “agonistic exchange” which emphasizes innovations that can arise from emulation.<sup>5</sup> The requirements of power seem to have encouraged rulers to distinguish themselves from competitors.

In regard to the second point, non-state actors are difficult to trace in medieval sources, but are most noticeable in the cases of civil wars in North China and the China-Inner Asia borderlands. The periodic rise of warlords from local society in North China provides glimpses of syncretic innovations in popular culture. It seems plausible that the propensity of military men to engage in foster and adoptive relationships with clients, discussed in chapter 7, may be a creative response to a cauldron of conflict and cross-cultural encounters. Moreover, the borderland inhabitants described throughout the book fashioned bicultural or multicultural identities drawn from a variety of sources, perhaps because, as James Scott (2009, 253–6) states, “command of a ‘mixed portfolio’ of identities” can serve as “a cultural insurance policy” in a turbulent frontier environment. Furthermore, Bayly (2004, 1–14) and Bayart (2005, 59–121) note that human beings appropriate culture from and adjust behavior to each other, presumably as a normal aspect of social psychology, but particularly in situations of cross-cultural contact. This may explain why imperial courts and borderlands—sites of frequent encounters between self and other that could disrupt humdrum routines and pedestrian mindsets—are especially productive zones of cultural adaptation and innovation. Moreover, the imperatives of power at court and survival in the borderlands seem to have further stimulated creative ideas that might help to outwit rivals or avoid dangers.

In regard to point three, ebbs and flows in the propensity of Sui-Tang monarchs to accept Turko-Mongols ideas can be explained as interplay between geographic, political, and cultural factors. During the period of greatest openness of the Sui and Tang empires to the outside, political entanglements with Inner Asia became self-perpetuating partly due to the cultural predilections of Sui-Tang emperors and partly due to geographic proximity and strategic advantages. The cosmopolitan tendencies of Sui-Tang rulers provided Turko-Mongols and other peoples with paths of upward social mobility in the imperial government. In exchange, Turko-Mongols contributed ideas and manpower to the Sui-Tang empires that bred power via military and diplomatic success, thereby creating a positive feedback loop, which reinforced the court’s willingness to welcome more Turko-Mongols into the empire.

This autocatalytic propensity to interact with Inner Asia was disrupted by the An Lushan rebellion in 755. Geographically, frontiers along the China-Inner Asia borderlands, which provided possibilities for recruitment of Turko-Mongols and other peoples, were much reduced after the rebellion. Militarily, lack of opportunity to expand into Inner Asia led to a declining need for Turko-Mongol cavalry. Politically, voices of Tang literati Confucian exclusivists gained sway at court scapegoating “barbarians” for the rebellion (Skaff 2000). Ideologically, revived Confucian orthodoxy

was better suited to a less expansive and pluralistic realm. Although Inner Asians continued to be drawn into Tang service, their numbers appear to be much reduced in comparison to pre-rebellion levels.

In sum, the geographic opportunities, cultural preferences, and power needs of Sui-Tang rulers continually reinforced political interactions in medieval Eastern Eurasia until the An Lushan rebellion, but went into decline thereafter due to less access to the borderlands, decreased need for cavalry in domestic warfare, and the growing persuasiveness of literati Confucian arguments to exclude Turko-Mongols. Exclusivists, who belittled the earlier successes of inclusivist policies, became dominant in the tenth century during the Song Dynasty. To the Song's north, the Khitan-ruled Liao and Tangut-ruled Xi Xia dynasties, straddling the China-Inner Asia borderlands, remained bastions of cosmopolitanism.<sup>6</sup> Song elites in the Chinese heartland failed to note the potential strategic and military benefits of including Turko-Mongols in their empire because they were blinded by exclusivist cultural preferences that were reinforced by lack of geographic access to Inner Asia. This self-reinforcing tendency was not disrupted until the thirteenth century, when the Mongol invasions reconfigured China spatially and reintroduced Eurasian cosmopolitanism to the Chinese heartland.

## Coda

This book has attempted to shift the capital-centered frame of reference by which Sui-Tang relations with Turko-Mongols commonly are viewed. The capital's relative wealth of resources magnified the discursive power of literati Confucian scribes, who habitually reinforced a misleading image of the capital's bureaucratic dominance over the empire and neighboring peoples. On the other hand, comparing the histories of Sui-Tang China and contemporary Inner Asia reveals the capital and empire in a synergistic relationship with Turko-Mongols and other Eurasian peoples. The China-Inner Asia borderlands deserve recognition, alongside the Silk Roads, as major avenues of these entanglements.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Attacks on North China Prefectures, 599–755

Table A is a chronological list of attacks on the North China circuits of Hexi, Longyou, Guannei, Hedong, and Hebei from 599 to 755, compiled from Sima Guang's annalistic history *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive mirror for the aid of government, ZZTJ). The data, analyzed in chapter 1 (Tables 1.2 and 1.3), provide insight into the changing balance of power in medieval Eastern Eurasia. All foreign raids and conquests are included, as well as revolts of subjects of the Sui-Tang empires who were not ethnically Han. Raiding by Han inhabitants of North China, which was common as warlords struggled with the Tang and each other during periods of civil war, is excluded unless the attacks were coordinated with the Türks or other peoples. Even though some attackers of North China, such as Tibet, also were active in the southwestern circuit of Jiannan, this front is excluded because it involved mountain warfare less relevant to China-Inner Asia relations. Each contemporaneous attack on a different prefecture is treated as a separate event, even though it may have been the work of the same invading party, because deep penetration of attackers is an indicator of weak frontier defenses and a balance of power tilting in favor of Inner Asia.

The time span of 599 to 755 was chosen to assure reliability of the evidence. To determine the starting point and test the overall dependability of Sima Guang's records, I compared his data with Hayashi Toshio's list (1990, 169–84) of Türk raids culled from a wider variety of sources. The comparison revealed numerous omissions in Sima's annals from 581 to 598, but only a few others thereafter. Despite the usefulness of Hayashi's research, it has not been incorporated into this appendix because it would have caused an overrepresentation of Türk raiding. The end point of the survey is the last year of the expansive Tang Empire before the An Lushan Rebellion in December 755. After the rebellion the Tang court became focused on internal warfare and lost control over the northwestern and northeastern regions of the empire. Analysis of the post-755 evidence at best would have led to the obvious conclusion that the Tang Empire was much weaker. Another indication of the value of the evidence is

Twitchett's general assessment of sources available to Sima Guang and other historians. Twitchett (1992, 198–205) divides the Tang into three blocks of time—618–759, 760–847, and 848–907—each with different, but relatively consistent sets of records suited to diachronic studies. The first block of time overlaps with most of the period covered in this appendix. The only caveat to Twitchett's general observation is a likely interruption in records of raids from 618 to 620 during the early civil war of the Sui-Tang transition.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, from 599 to 755 the Sui and Tang Historiography Offices seem to have been functioning normally and collecting records of warfare in North China that later became available to Sima Guang.

Table A. Attacks on North China Prefectures, 599–755

**Key:** C-A=Counter attack; Gray shading=years without raids; [Name in brackets]=Han Chinese borderland warlord; (Name in parentheses)=Known leader of attack; ?=uncertainty about identification of place attacked; Heavy line (—):=Break in Sui-Tang emperor's reign or combined emperors' reigns analyzed in Table 1.2.

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Related Events Response	ZZTJ Ref.	
599	W. Türks (Tardu Qaghan)	Guannei		Qimin Qaghan submitted to Sui in Ordos plateau	178:5563	
	Türks	Hedong			178:5568	
600	W. Türks (Tardu Qaghan)	Hexi		C-A	179:5571	
601	Türks	Guannei			179:5588	
602	Türks	Guannei	Ordos Türks	C-A	179:5590	
603–4						
605	Khitan	Hebei	Yíngzhou	Türk C-A	180:5621	
606						
607	Tiele	Hexi	Dunhuang	C-A	180:5635	
608–13						
614	Jihu (Liu Jialun)	Guannei	Ya'nán		182:5690	
615	Türks	Hedong	Lánzhou	C-A	Sui Yangdi's failed attempt to overthrow Shibi Qaghan	182:5697

Table A (continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Attackers</i>	<i>Circuit</i>	<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Sui-Tang Response</i>	<i>Related Events</i>	<i>ZZTJ Ref.</i>
	Türks	Hedong	Yanmen	Siege		182:5697–9
616	Türks	N. Hedong		C-A		183:5717
617	Türks	Hedong	Yunzhou	C-A	Intense civil war in China	183:5730
	Türks	Hedong	Jinyang	C-A		183:5734–5
618	Jihu	Guannei	Chang'an	C-A	Tang dynasty founded	185:5785
619	Chuluo Qaghan succeeded Shibi Qaghan					
620	Türks, Jihu, Guannei			C-A		188:5886
	[Liang Shidu]					
	Türks	Hexi	Liangzhou	C-A	defeated	188:5892
621	Jihu	Guannei?		C-A		188:5900
	Türks	Hedong	Puzhou		Illig Qaghan succeeded Chuluo Qaghan	189:5907–8
	Türks	Hedong	Yanmen	C-A		189:5911–2
	Türks	Hedong	Daizhou	C-A	defeated	189:5927
	Türks	Hedong	Bingzhou	C-A		189:5927
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou	C-A		189:5929
622	Türks	Hedong	Xinzhou	C-A		190:5951
	Türks, (Liu Hebei Heita)		Dingzhou	C-A		190:5952
	Türks (Illig Qaghan)	Hedong	Bingzhou	C-A		190:5954
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou	C-A		190:5954
	Türks	Hebei	Zhenzhou	Tang diplo- macy	Tang-Türk covenant	190:5955
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Diezhou			190:5951
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Taozhou	C-A		190:5951
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou	C-A		190:5953
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Taozhou	C-A		190:5954

(continued)



Table A (continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Attackers</i>	<i>Circuit</i>	<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Sui-Tang Response</i>	<i>Related Events</i>	<i>ZZTJ Ref.</i>
622	Khitan	Hebei	Beiping			190:5956
623	Türks, [Liang Shidu]	Guannei	Qingzhou			190:5967
	Türks, [Liang Shidu]	Guannei	Suizhou			190:5968
	Türks, [Yuan Junzhang]	Hedong	Yunzhou			190:5968
	Türks, [Gao Kaidao]	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A		190:5968
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou			190:5970
	Türks	Hedong	Shuozhou	C-A defeated		190:5970
	Türks	Guannei	Yinzhou			190:5970
	Türks	Hedong	Yunzhou			190:5970
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou			190:5971
	Türks	Longyou	Weizhou			190:5971
	Türks	Hebei	Youzhou			190:5972
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Fangzhou	Prefect flees		190:5966
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Taozhou			190:5967
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou			190:5967
	Tuyuhun, Tangut	Longyou	Hezhou	C-A		190:5967
	Qay, [Gao Kaidao]	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A		190:5968
	Qay, [Gao Kaidao]	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A		190:5971
624	Türks	Hebei	Dingzhou	C-A		190:5975
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou			190:5980
	Türks	Hedong	Shuozhou			190:5983
	Türks	Hedong	Daizhou	C-A		191:5988
	Türks, [Yuan Junzhang]	Hedong	Shuozhou	C-A		191:5988

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou	C-A		191:5988
	Türks	Guannei	Longzhou	C-A		191:5988
	Türks	Guannei	Jingzhou			191:5988
	Türks (Tuli Shad), [Yuan Junzhang]	Hedong	Bingzhou			191:5989
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou			191:5991
	Türks	Hedong	Xinzhou			191:5991
	Türks	Hedong	Bingzhou			191:5991
	Türks	Guannei	Suizhou	C-A		191:5993
	Türks	Hexi	Ganzhou			191:5993
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou			191:5988
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Shanzhou			191:5991
	Tuyuhun, Qiang	Longyou	Diezhou			191:5993
625	Türks (Illig Qaghan)	Guannei	Lingzhou			191:5996
	Türks (Illig Qaghan)	Unknown	Xiangzhou?			191:5996
	Türks	Hedong	Bingzhou	C-A defeated		191:5997
	Türks	Guannei	Lingzhou			191:5997
	Türks	Hedong	Qinzhou			191:5997
	Türks	Hedong	Lüzhou	C-A		191:5997
	Türks	Hebei	Hanzhou (i.e., Jizhou)			191:5997
	Türks (Illig Qaghan)	Guannei	Suizhou	C-A		191:5997
	Türks	Hedong	Bingzhou	C-A		191:5998
	Türks	Unknown	Jinzhou?			191:5998
	Türks	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A		191:5998
	Türks	Guannei	Ningzhou			191:5998
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Diezhou			191:5994
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Diezhou	C-A		191:5998

(continued)

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.	
625	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou			191:5999	
	Tangut	Longyou	Weizhou			191:5995	
626,	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou	C-A		191:5999	
Jan.–	Türks	Guannei	Lingzhou			191:6000	
Aug.	Türks	Hexi	Liangzhou			191:6000	
	Türks	Hedong	Shuozhou			191:6000	
	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou			191:6000	
	Türks	Guannei	Jingzhou	C-A		191:6000	
	Türks	Guannei	Lingzhou			191:6003	
	Türks	Longyou	Qinzhou			191:6003	
	Türks	Longyou	Lanzhou			191:6003	
	Türks	Guannei	Longzhou			191:6014	
	Türks	Longyou	Weizhou	C-A		191:6014	
	Tuyuhun, Tangut	Longyou	Minzhou	C-A		191:6000	
	Tuyuhun, Tangut	Longyou	Hezhou			191:6003	
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou			191:6014	
	Tangut	Longyou	Kuozhou			191:6003	
	626, Sept.– Dec.	Türks	Guannei	Jingzhou		Taizong usurped throne in Sept.	191:6018
		Türks	Guannei	Chang'an	C-A, Diplo- macy	Tang-Türk covenant at Wei R.	191:6018
627							
628	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Minzhou			192:6047	
	Türks	Unknown	Unknown			193:6057	
629	Türks	Hexi		C-A		193:6066	
630–1	Tang conquest of the First Türk Empire in 630						
632	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Lanzhou	C-A		194:6095	
633							
634	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Shanzhou			194:6106	
	Tuyuhun	Longyou	Kuozhou	C-A		194:6106	
	Tuyuhun	Hexi	Liangzhou	Expedi- tion		194:6108	

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
635	Tangut	Longyou	Diezhou		Tang conquered Tuyuhun	194:6115
636–40						
641	Sir-Yantuo	Hedong	Shuozhou	Expedi- tion	Taizong traveled east attempting Feng-Shan ritual	196:6170
642	W. Türks	Hexi	Yizhou	C-A		196:6177
	W. Türks (Chuyue, Chumi)	Hexi	Xizhou	C-A		196:6177
643–4						
645	Sir-Yantuo	Guannei	Xiazhou	C-A	Tang campaigning against Koguryō	198:6232
646–50 Tang conquests of Sir Yantuo (646) and Tarim Basin (648); Gaozong became Tang emperor 649						
651	W. Türks	Hexi	Tingzhou	Expedi- tion		199:6274
652–60 Tang conquest of Western Türks in 659						
661	Uighur	Unknown		Expedi- tion	Change in Uighur leadership	200:6326
662	W. Türks	Hexi	Tingzhou	C-A		200:6333
663–4						
665	Tibet, Kashgar, Gongyue	Anxi Protectorate	Khotan			201:6344
666–9 Tang conquest of Koguryō in 668						
670	Tibet, Khotan	Anxi Protectorate	Kucha, Bohuan	Failed expedi- tion	Tibet conquered Tarim Basin & Tuyuhun	201:6363
671–5 Empress Wu began to dominate court after Gaozong suffered 2nd major stroke in 675						
676	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou			202:6379
	Tibet	Longyou	Kuozhou			202:6379
	Tibet	Longyou	Hezhou	C-A		202:6379
	Tibet	Longyou	Fangzhou	Expedi- tion		202:6379
	Tibet	Longyou	Leizhou			202:6380

(continued)

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
677-8						
679	W. Türks, Tibet	Anxi Protectorate		C-A	Weather disaster	202:6390
	Türks	Hebei	Dingzhou		Same	202:6392
	Khitan, Qay	Hebei	Yíngzhou	C-A	Same	202:6392
680	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A	Same	202:6395
	Türks	Hedong	Yunzhou	C-A	Same	202:6396
681	Türks	Guannei	Yuanzhou		Same	202:6399
	Türks	Guannei	Qíngzhou	C-A	Same	202:6399
682	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hedong	Bíngzhou	C-A	Weather disaster; Ilterish Qaghan proclaimed Türk ruler	203:6412
	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Guannei	Shanyu Protectorate	C-A	Weather disaster	203:6412
	W. Türks	Anxi Protectorate	Süyáb	C-A		203:6408
	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A		203:6412
683	Türks	Hebei	Dingzhou	C-A		203:6413
	Türks	Hebei	Guizhou			203:6413
	Türks	Guannei	Shanyu Protectorate	C-A		203:6413
	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hedong	Yuzhou	C-A	defeated	203:6414
	Türk outer tribe	Hedong	Lánzhou	C-A	Death of Gaozong	203:6415
684	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hedong	Shuozhou		Empress Wu continued to dominate court	203:6420
685	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hedong	Bínzhou	C-A		203:6433

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
697	Türks	Hedong	Daizhou	C-A	defeated	203:6434
686	Türks			C-A		203:6442
687	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A		204:6443
	Türks (Ilterish Qaghan)	Hedong	Shuozhou	C-A		204:6445
688–93	Türks reconquered Mongolia (ca. 687–91); Empress Wu founded Zhou Dynasty in 690					
694	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Lingzhou		Qapaghan Qaghan succeeded Ilterish Qaghan	205:6493
695	Tibet	Longyou	Taozhou	C-A		205:6503
696	Khitan	Hebei	Yingzhou		Mismanagement of relations	205:6505
	Khitan	Hebei	Tanzhou	Expedition	Same defeated	205:6506
	Khitan	Hebei	Pingzhou (Andong)	C-A	Same defeated	205:6508
	Khitan	Hebei	Jizhou		Same	205:6510
	Khitan	Hebei	Yingzhou		Same	205:6510
	Türks	Hexi	Liangzhou	C-A	defeated	205:6507
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Lingzhou			206:6512
697	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Shengzhou	C-A		206:6514
	Khitan	Hebei	Youzhou	Expedition	defeated	206:6515
	Khitan	Hebei	Zhaozhou			206:6520

(continued)

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
	Khitan	Hebei	Jizhou			206:6520
698	Türks	Hebei	Guizhou		Botched diplo- macy	206:6531
	Türks	Hebei	Tanzhou		Same	206:6531
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Hebei	Yuzhou		Same	206:6533
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Hebei	Dingzhou		Same	206:6533
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Hebei	Zhaozhou	Expedi- tion	Same	206:6534
699	Xue Na improved Hebei defenses (698–712)					
700	Tibet	Hexi	Liangzhou	C-A		207:6549
	W. Turks	Anxi Protectorate	Sūyāb	C-A		207:6550
701	Türks	Longyou				207:6553
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)					207:6556
702	Türks	Guannei	Yánzhou			207:6558
	Türks	Guannei	Xiazhou			207:6558
	Türks	Hedong	Bingzhou	C-A	Qapaghan Qaghan captured key pass in N. Hedong	207:6558
	Türks	Hedong	Daizhou		Same	207:6559
	Türks	Hedong	Xinzhou		Same	207:6559
703–6	Empress Wu accepted Qapaghan Qaghan's marriage proposal in 703; Zhongzong took power in 705					
707	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Lingzhou	C-A	defeated	208:6607
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Yuanzhou			208:6608



Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
	Türks (Qapaghan Qaghan)	Guannei	Huizhou			208:6608
708	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Kucha		Mismanagement of relations	209:6627
	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Aksu		Same	209:6627
	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Karashahr		Same	209:6627
	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Kashgar		Same	209:6627–8
709–10	Yellow River outer defenses built in 709; Ruizong took power in 710					
711	Qay	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A		210:6659
	Qay	Hebei	Pingzhou	C-A		210:6659
712	Khitan, Qay	Hebei	Youzhou		Xuanzong took power	210:6678
713						
714	Türks	Hexi	Tingzhou	C-A		211:6696
	Tibet	Longyou	Weizhou	C-A		211:6704
	Tibet	Longyou	Weizhou	C-A		211:6705
715–6	Assassination of Qapaghan Qaghan ca. 715; Bilgä Qaghan took power					
717	Türgish, Ti- bet, Arabs	Anxi Protectorate	Aksu	C-A		211:6728
718–9						
720	Türks	Hexi	Tingzhou		Failed Tang- Basmil-Khitan campaign against Türks	212:6742
	Türks	Hexi	Ganzhou		Same	212:6742
	Türks	Hexi	Liangzhou	C-A	Same defeated	212:6742
721	Hu (Kang Daibin)	Guannei	Xiazhou	C-A	Revolt caused by heavy Tang taxation	212:6744
722–5	Harsh winter and outer tribe revolts against Türks in Mongolia in 723–4					

(continued)

Table A (continued)

Year	Attackers	Circuit	Prefecture	Sui-Tang Response	Related Events	ZZTJ Ref.
726	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	4 Garrisons		Mismanagement of relations	213:6775
	Tibet	Hexi	Ganzhou	Expedition		213:6776
727	Tibet	Hexi	Guazhou		Tang-Türk trade pact	213:6778
	Tibet, Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Kucha	C-A		213:6779
728	Tibet	Hexi	Guazhou	C-A		213:6782
	Tibet	Hexi	Ganzhou	C-A		213:6782
729	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A		213:6784
730	Khitan (Ketuyu)	Hebei	Yíngzhou	C-A	Botched diplomacy	213:6790
731–4	Tang-Qay expedition against Khitan-Türk army in 733					
735	Türgish	Hexi	Tingzhou			214:6812
	Türgish	Anxi Protectorate	Aksu	Expedition		214:6812
736–7	Tang defeated Türgish in 736					
738	Tibet	Hexi		C-A		214:6832
739	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A		214:6838
740						
741	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A		214:6844
742	Tibet	Longyou	Kuozhou			214:6846
	Tibet	Longyou	Shanzhou	C-A	defeated	214:6846
743–50	Tang captured strategic mountain passes to block Tibetan invasion routes					
751	Khitan	Hebei	Youzhou	C-A	Failed Tang campaign	216:6909
752	Türk (Abuz Guannei Yabghu)	Anbei		C-A	Revolt of bridle chief	216:6913
753–5	An Lushan rebelled in December 755					

## Appendix B: North China Population from Han through Northern Song Dynasties

Figures for “Northern Households” and, when available, “Northern Population” represent the totals of the Tang northern circuits of Hexi, Longyou, Guannei, Hedong, and Hebei that are the subject of the geographical survey in Appendix C or their approximate equivalents during other dynasties. Interpretation of imperial Chinese census enumeration can be problematic, but the data shown in Tables B.1, B.2, B.3, and B.4 is chosen from censuses that are considered to be reasonably accurate representations of population during periods of internal peace and prosperity (Bielenstein 1947; Hartwell 1982, 427; Pulleyblank 1961).

**Table B.1. Han Population in North China, 2 CE**

<i>Northern Admin. Unit</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Households</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Population</i>
Sili	1,519,857	12.30%	6,682,602	11.59%
Jizhou	1,341,866	10.86%	5,177,462	8.98%
Liangzhou	331,260	2.68%	1,282,013	2.22%
Bingzhou	450,432	3.65%	1,926,876	3.34%
Youzhou	880,667	7.13%	3,714,656	6.44%
Shuofang	313,733	2.54%	1,673,450	2.90%
North Total	4,837,815	39.15%	20,457,059	35.47%
Empire Total	12,356,470		57,671,401	

*Based on Liang 1980, Table 2.*

**Table B.2. Sui Population in North China, 609**

<i>Northern Admin. Unit</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Households</i>
Yongzhou	1,017,925	11.22%
Jizhou	2,672,381	29.46%
North total	3,690,306	40.69%
Empire total	9,070,414	

*Based on Liang 1980, Table 22.*

**Table B.3. Tang Population in North China, 742**

<i>Northern Admin. Unit</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Households</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Population</i>
Hexi-Longyou	121,413	1.35%	536,361	1.05%
Guannei	819,195	9.13%	4,654,766	9.13%
Hedong	630,511	7.03%	3,723,217	7.30%
Hebei	1,487,503	16.58%	10,230,972	20.07%
North total	3,058,622	34.08%	19,145,316	37.56%
Empire total	8,973,634		50,975,543	

*Based on Liang 1980, Table 25.*

**Table B.4. Northern Song Population in North China, 1080**

<i>Northern Admin. Unit</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Proportion of Tot. Households</i>
W. Shaanxi	509,199	3.07%
E. Shaanxi	846,045	5.11%
Hedong	576,198	3.48%
Hebei	1,232,659	7.44%
North total	3,164,101	19.10%
Empire total	16,569,874	

*Based on Liang 1980, Table 36.*

## Appendix C: Tang Northern Prefectures

In Tables C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4, and C.5, Tang prefectures of each northern circuit (*dao*) are listed alphabetically according to their circuit of jurisdiction. The data in these tables was used to classify the northern prefectures in order to produce Map 1.2 (see chapter 1), which depicts the spatial parameters of the China-Inner Asia borderlands during the eighth century. Information on the prefectures is derived from the monographs on administrative geography in the two Tang histories and the earliest extant comprehensive Chinese geography, *Yuanhe jun-xian tuzhi* (Maps and geography of the commanderies and counties of the Yuanhe reign, YHJX). These works are complementary because each has strengths and weaknesses. The *Old Tang history* monograph (JTS 38:1383–41:1781), mainly composed from records dating from the seventh to mid-eighth centuries, includes descriptions of changes in administrative arrangements and census data for most prefectures during the Zhenguan (627–649) and Tianbao (742–756) reign eras (Twitchett 1992, 224–9). The Tianbao population figures for each prefecture are included in the tables, and were used to produce Map 1.2. The *New Tang history* monograph (XTS 37:959–43b:1156) and *Maps and geography* have less complete census data, but are particularly valuable for enumerating local tribute. The *New Tang history* monograph does not date tribute, but items most probably were sent to the throne in the eighth and ninth centuries (Schafer and Wallacker 1957–8, 213). *Maps and geography* dates the local tribute to the Kaiyuan (712–741) or the early Yuanhe (806–813) reign era, and provides descriptions of the contemporary natural environment (YHJX Preface, 1).

English translations of tribute products in most cases are based upon Schafer and Wallacker (1957–8), who also provide pertinent Chinese characters and romanizations. In cases where Schafer and Wallacker do not mention a product or my translation differs from theirs, pinyin transliterations are provided in parentheses. The longitudes and latitudes of prefectures, which provided the data points used to create Map 1.2, indicate the locations of modern cities or towns that are nearest to the medieval prefectural seats. When a Tang prefecture underwent a name change during the dynasty or has a common alternative name, the second name is enclosed in parentheses.

The prefectural types of borderland (B), borderland periphery (BP), and agricultural (A) were determined according to the following criteria.

Borderland prefectures met at least one of the following characteristics that normally were associated with the steppe:

- 1) Presence of Turko-Mongols or other peoples known to practice pastoral nomadism or a combination of crop cultivation and animal husbandry.
- 2) Mention of wild horse hides as a native product, a sure sign of grassland.

Prefectures classified as borderland periphery included at least one of the following characteristics associated with agro-pastoralism or hunting (“borderland” prefectures also may have shared these attributes):

- 1) Mention of horses, sheep, and cattle or their products, such as dairy foods or felt made from sheep wool.
- 2) Production of goods used for Inner Asian warfare on horseback, such as bows, arrows, or riding gear.
- 3) Evidence of hunting raptors, or game animals favored in Inner Asia, such as deer, elk, marmots, or leopards (Allsen 2006; Schafer 1957).

Agricultural prefectures lacked all of these five characteristics and appear to have had a typical northern Chinese subsistence economy dominated by intensive dry land millet farming and silk production. Presumably, most protein derived from grains and legume products, like bean curd. Relatively little animal protein entered the diet because a preference for intensive grain agriculture left limited space to raise pigs and chickens (Bray 1984, 3–6).

Table C.1 : Hexi Circuit

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Ganzhou	Gansu	100.46	38.93	22,092	Wild horse hides; musk deer; <i>kaymak</i> (clotted cream); peregrine falcons	Mountains have excellent pasture for cattle & sheep; One mountain has plentiful wood for arrow stock	B	JTS 40:1641; XTS 40:1045; YHJX 40:1020–2
Guazhou	Gansu	96.02	39.80	4,987	Wild horse hides	Large swamp with bountiful grass suited to grazing	B	JTS 40:1642; XTS 40:1045; YHJX 40:1027–8
Liangzhou	Gansu	102.63	37.92	120,281	Wild horse hides; felt of lambswool		B	JTS 40:1639; XTS 40:1044; YHJX 40:1017–20
Shazhou	Gansu	94.66	40.14	32,234	Wild horse hides; ewe horn ( <i>ziyang jiao</i> )		B	JTS 40:1644; XTS 40:1045; YHJX 40:1025–6
Suzhou	Gansu	98.51	39.74	8,476	Wild horse hides		B	JTS 40:1642; XTS 40:1045–6; YHJX 40:1022–5

(continued)



Table C.1 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Tingzhou	Xinjiang	89.18	44.00	9,964	<i>Yinya</i> horn; <i>suhuo</i> horn (unidentified animals)	Formerly called Qaghan Stupa City; Major center for controlling nomadic tribes; Han residents immigrated after 660	B	JTS 40:1645–6; XTS 40:1047; YHJX 40:1031–2
Xizhou	Xinjiang	89.18	42.97	49,476	Felt		BP	JTS 40:1644–5; XTS 40:1046–7; YHJX 40:1030–1
Yizhou	Xinjiang	93.50	42.84	10,157	<i>Yinya</i> horn (unidentified animal)	“Various barbarians” lived there at end of Sui Dynasty	B	JTS 40:1643–4; XTS 40:1046; YHJX 40:1027–8

Table C.2 : Longyou Circuit

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Chengzhou	Gansu	105.17	34.19	21,508		Former territory of Dī and White Horse Dī people	BP	JTS 40:1631; YHJX 39:985
Dangzhou	Gansu	104.53	33.66	7,199	Musk deer	Former territory of Dangchang Qiang	B	JTS 40:1639; XTS 40:1044; YHJX 39:1001–2
Diezhou (Fangzhou)	Gansu	103.26	34.05	7,674	Musk deer; yak <i>kaymak</i> ; sweet pine incense ( <i>gan song xiang</i> )	Former territory of Qiang; Tuyuhun conquered in W. Wei; All commoners are Tangut and Qiang; Fell to Tibet in 674	B	JTS 40:1638; XTS 40:1044; YHJX 39:998–1001
Hezhou	Gansu	103.21	35.60	36,886	Musk deer	Former territory of W. Qiang; Numerous garrisons defending against Tibet	BP	JTS 40:1633; XTS 40:1040–1; YHJX 39: 988–90
Kuozhou	Qinghai	102.06	36.17	24,400	Musk deer, <i>kaymak</i> , Père David's Deer ( <i>milu</i> )	Former territory of W. Qiang; Tuyuhun had a walled city; Fell to Tibet in 759	B	JTS 40:1637–8; XTS 40:1043; YHJX 39: 993–5

(continued)

Table C.2 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Lanzhou	Gansu	103.94	36.33	21,386	Musk deer; Tarbagan marmot; haircloth; wild horse hide	Tang horse ranch in east; Former territory of Western Qiang; Fell to Tibet in 762	B	JTS 40:1633–4; XTS 40:1042; YHJX 39: 986–8, 1002
Minzhou	Gansu	104.03	34.44	23,441	Yak <i>kaymak</i>	Former territory of W. Qiang; Fell to Tibet after Qiang rebellion in 761	B	JTS 40:1637; XTS 40:1043; YHJX 39:995;
Qinzhou	Gansu	105.66	34.86	109,700	Yak tails	Tang horse ranch in north	BP	JTS 40:1630; XTS 40:1040; YHJX 39:979–80, 1005, n. 13
Shanzhou	Qinghai	102.40	36.48	27,019	Antelope horn ( <i>lingyang jiao</i> ); haircloth ( <i>he</i> )	Former territory of W. Qiang; Fell to Tibet in 761	B	JTS 40:1634–5; XTS 40:1041; YHJX 39: 982–4

Taozhou	Gansu	103.34	34.70	15,060	Musk deer; haircloth ( <i>he</i> ); <i>kaymak</i>	Former territory of Qiang; Tuyuhun conquered during N. Wei; Tangut tribe on outskirts in 742; Fell to Tibet in 763	B	JTS 40:1636; XTS 40:1043; YHJX 39:997–8
Weizhou	Gansu	104.63	35.00	24,520	Musk deer	Tang horse ranch in north	BP	JTS 40:1632; XTS 40:1041; YHJX 39: 982–4
Wuzhou	Gansu	104.92	33.39	5,313	Musk deer; antelope horn ( <i>lingyang jiao</i> ); pheasant “mountain fowl” tails	Dī territory in 3 <sup>rd</sup> century	BP	XTS 40:1042; YHJX 39: 984–6

Table C.3 : Guannei Circuit

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Anbei Protectorate (Zhongshouxiang)	Inner Mongolia	109.81	40.66	7,498	Wild horse skins	Site of major garrison	B	JTS 38:1420; XTS 37: 976
Binzhou	Shaanxi	108.07	35.03	135,250		Site of Tang horse ranch	BP	JTS 38:1404; XTS 37:967; YHJX 3:60–3
Jingzhao (Chang'an)	Shaanxi	108.88	34.27	1,967,188	Boot felt	Sui-Tang capital city	BP	JTS 38:1395–6; XTS 37:961; YHJX 1:1
Danzhou	Shaanxi	110.16	36.05	87,625	Musk deer	“Buluo Jihu” inhabitants have “barbarian heads and Han tongues”; Jihu controlled the area in 613	B	JTS 38:1401–2; XTS 37:971; YHJX 3:72–5
Fangzhou	Shaanxi	109.27	35.64	120,208	Bowstring hemp ( <i>gongxian ma</i> )	Northern Zhou Dynasty horse ranch on outskirts	BP	JTS 38:1401; XTS 37:970; YHJX 3:72
Fengxiang (Qizhou)	Shaanxi	107.38	34.52	380,463		Site of Sui-Tang horse ranches	BP	JTS 38:966–7; XTS 37:961; YHJX 2:40–3

Fengzhou (Xishouxiang)	Inner Mongolia	108.27	41.09	9,641	Felt; wild horse skins; camel haircloth	Site of major garrison	B	JTS 38:1417; XTS 37:976; YHJX 4:111–3, 116
Fuzhou	Shaanxi	109.34	36.28	153,714		Qin long defensive wall was in north; Former territory of Rong & Jie people	B	JTS 38:1409; XTS 37:970; YHJX 3:69–71
Huazhou	Shaanxi	110.29	34.60	223,613	Sparrow hawk; peregrine falcon		BP	JTS 38:1399; XTS 37:964; YHJX 2:33–5
Huizhou	Gansu	104.68	36.56	26,660	Felt saddle covers; camel haircloth; deer tongue; deer tail	Tang horse ranch in south	BP	JTS 38:1418; XTS 37:973; YHJX 3:98
Jingzhou	Gansu	107.35	35.33	186,849		Site of Tang horse ranch from 763–8; Tibet controlled parts of territory from 784–8	BP	JTS 38:1404–5; XTS 37:968; YHJX 3:55–7
Lingzhou	Ningxia	106.33	38.09	53,163	Felt; horse whips; wild horses; deer hides; musk deer; wild boar; [boot] rawhide; white eagle & gyrfalcon feathers	Site of major garrison and seat of numerous bridle prefectures	B	JTS 38:1415–6, 221a:621; XTS 37:972; YHJX 3:91–6
Linzhou	Shaanxi	110.49	38.82	10,903	Elk antler		BP	JTS 38:1419; XTS 37:975

(continued)

Table C.3 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Longzhou	Shaanxi	106.85	34.89	100,148			A	JTS 38:1405; XTS 37:967–8; YHJX 3:44–6
Ningzhou	Gansu	107.92	35.50	224,837	Five-color felt saddle cover	Site of Tang horse ranch	BP	JTS 38:1406; XTS 37:969; YHJX 3:60–3
Qingzhou	Gansu	107.75	35.90	124,336	Ox <i>kaymak</i> ; barbarian female linen ( <i>hu'nübu</i> ); musk deer	“Barbarians” destroyed two towns in 617; Five Tangut clans live in outskirts	BP	JTS 38: 1408–9; XTS 37:969–70
Shangzhou	Shaanxi	109.93	33.87	52,080	Musk deer; bow stock		BP	JTS 39:1538; XTS 37:965
Shanyu Protectorate	Inner Mongolia	111.82	40.37	13,000	Barbarian female linen ( <i>hu'nübu</i> ); wild horse skins	Xiongnu occupied territory during Three Kingdoms period; Site of major Tang garrison	B	JTS 39:1488; XTS 37:976; YHJX 4:107–8
Shengzhou	Inner Mongolia	111.14	40.27	20,952	Barbarian linen ( <i>hubu</i> ); Ji female linen ( <i>nü Ji bu</i> ); elk antler ( <i>qingtuolu jiao</i> )	Xiongnu occupied territory during Three Kingdoms period; Territory of Türk-allied warlord, Liang Shidu, ca. 618	B	JTS 38:1419



Suizhou	Shaanxi	110.73	37.46	89,112	Barbarian female linen ( <i>hu'nübu</i> )	Jihu inhabitants since end of Han	B	JTS 38:1412; XTS 37:974; YHJX 4:102
Tongzhou	Shaanxi	109.93	34.80	408,705	Boot rawhide; crinkled <i>jimo</i> hide; musk deer	Suited to rearing livestock; Site of ranch supplying cattle & sheep to Tang imperial household; Bitter Spring has waters that make sheep fat and beautiful	BP	JTS 38:1400, 44:1883; XTS 37:965; YHJX 2:36–7
Xiazhou	Shaanxi	108.79	37.59	53,104	Felt; <i>kaymak</i> ; composite bow ( <i>jiaogong</i> )	Base of Türk-allied warlord, Liang Shidu; Tangut resettled in area in 690	B	JTS 38:1414; XTS 37:973–4; YHJX 4:99–100
Yanzhou	Shaanxi	109.48	36.60	100,040	Musk deer; birch bark	Jihu territory in 619; Tuyuhun migrated from Liangzhou in 676	B	JTS 38:1410; XTS 37:971; YHJX 3:75–6
Yánzhou	Shaanxi	107.59	37.59	16,665	Shu oxen (unidentified type)	Site of Tang horse ranch; Territory of Türk-allied warlord, Liang Shidu	BP	JTS 38:1417; XTS 37:973; YHJX 3:97

(continued)

Table C.3 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Yinzhou	Shaanxi	109.74	38.29	45,527	Ji female linen ( <i>nü Ji bu</i> )	Rong & Di lived here during 16 Kingdoms period; Tangut migrated here from Tibet-dominated Hexi after 756; Tang ranch est. in 833	B	JTS 38:1413; XTS 37:974, 43b:1123
Youzhou	Inner Mongolia	107.98	39.09	32,652		Previously the site of Six Barbarian Prefectures; Site of Kang Daibin rebellion	B	JTS 38:1418–9; YHJX 4:106
Yuanzhou	Ningxia	106.27	36.01	33,146	Felt; felt saddle covers	Tang horse ranch in south; Headquarters of Tang horse system; Temporary site to supervise surrendered Türks in 632	BP	JTS 38:1407; XTS 37:968; YHJX 3:57–60

Table C.4 : Hedong Circuit

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Cizhou	Shanxi	110.67	36.10	62,486			A	JTS 39:1476–7; XTS 39:1002; YHJX 12:341
Daizhou	Shanxi	112.94	39.06	100,350	Musk aromatic; leopard tails; white eagle feathers	Xiongnu invaded at end of Han; Local garrison est. in 680 or earlier	BP	JTS 39:1483; XTS 39:1006; YHJX 14:401–3
Fenzhou	Shanxi	111.78	37.26	320,233	Felt saddle facing		BP	JTS 39:1475; XTS 39:1004; YHJX 13:341
Jiangzhou	Shanxi	111.07	35.71	517,331			A	JTS 39:1471; XTS 39:1001; YHJX 12:329
Jinzhou	Shanxi	111.51	36.08	429,221		One mountain has lush forest	A	JTS 39:1472; XTS 39:1001; YHJX 12:336
Lánzhou	Shanxi	111.56	38.70	84,006	Musk aromatic; bear hides	Xiongnu invaded at end of Han; Sui long wall in north; Territory of Türk-allied warlord, Liu Wuzhou, until 621; Site of Tang ranch & local garrison	BP	JTS 39:1485; XTS 39:1005; YHJX 14: 395–7

(continued)

Table C.4 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Liaozhou (Yizhou)	Shanxi	113.29	37.11	54,580			A	JTS 39:1479–80; XTS 39:1004; YHJX 13:380
Lüzhou	Shanxi	113.10	36.19	388,660			A	JTS 39:1476–7; XTS 39:1008; YHJX 15:417–8
Puzhou	Shanxi	110.30	34.84	469,213	Felt		BP	JTS 39:1469–70; XTS 39:999; YHJX 12:323
Qinzhou	Shanxi	112.20	36.58	34,963	Bowstring hemp ( <i>gongxian ma</i> )		BP	JTS 39:1479; XTS 39:1004; YHJX 13:380
Shizhou	Shanxi	111.13	37.51	66,935	Barbarian female linen ( <i>hu'nübu</i> ); musk aromatic	Site of Lishihu [Jihu] rebellion at end of Sui.	B	JTS 39:1486; XTS 39:1006; YHJX 14:398
Shuozhou	Shanxi	112.42	39.31	24,533	White eagle feathers; leopard tails		BP	JTS 39:1487; XTS 39: 1007; YHJX 14:407–8
Bingzhou (Taiyuan)	Shanxi	112.33	37.60	778,278	Horse saddles; grape wine	“Barbarian” rulers during 16 Kingdoms; Li Yuan [Tang Gaozu] headed garrison in late Sui; Included “Western Barbar- ian” County, 632–43	BP	JTS 39:1480–81; XTS 39:1003–4; YHJX 13:359–62

Xinzhou	Shanxi	112.73	38.40	82,032	Musk; [Amur] leopard tails	Xiongnu invaded at end of Han; Territory of Türk-allied warlord, Liu Wuzhou, 619–21	BP	JTS 39:1484; XTS 39:1006; YHJX 14:400
Xizhou	Shanxi	110.93	36.69	124,420 or 134,420	Barbarian female linen ( <i>hu'nübu</i> ); musk	Horses pastured at local river produce fine colts	BP	JTS 39:1473–4; XTS 39:1002; YHJX 12:345–8
Yunzhou	Shanxi	113.29	40.09	7,930	Yak tails; eagle feathers	Xiongnu invaded at end of Han; Site of N. Wei capital; Territory of Türk-allied warlords Liu Wuzhou & Yuan Junzhang, 618–31; Türks destroyed the town, ca. 682; Town reestablished ca. 730; Hezhen Mt. is 30 <i>li</i> east of prefectural seat, “ <i>Hezhen</i> means ‘30 <i>li</i> ’ in barbarian language”	BP	JTS 39:1487–8; XTS 39:1006–7; YHJX 14:409–10
Yuzhou	Shanxi	114.23	39.43	20,958	Bear hides; [Amur] leopard tails; pine nuts	Territory of Türk-allied warlords, Liu Wuzhou and Yuan Junzhang, 618–31	BP	JTS 39:1483; XTS 39: 1007; YHJX 14:404
Zezhou	Shanxi	112.83	35.50	157,090	Ring-necked pheasant “wild fowl”		A	JTS 39:1478; XTS 39:1008; YHJX 15:417–8

Table C.5 : Hebei Circuit

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Beizhou	Hebei	115.87	37.14	834,756	White felt; felt saddle covers		BP	JTS 39:1496–7; XTS 39:1012; YHJX 16:463–4
Bozhou	Shandong	116.10	36.59	408,252			A	JTS 39:1495–6; XTS 39:1011–2; YHJX 16:456–7
Cangzhou	Hebei	117.08	38.06	825,705			A	JTS 39:1506; XTS 39:1017; YHJX 18:517
Chanzhou	Henan	ca. 115	ca. 36	Unknown	Composite bows ( <i>jiaogong</i> )		BP	JTS 39:1495; XTS 39:1013; YHJX 16:466
Dezhou	Shandong	116.56	37.33	659,855			A	JTS 39:1509; XTS 39:1018; YHJX 17:494
Dingzhou	Hebei	114.98	38.51	496,676			A	JTS 39:1510–1; XTS 39:1018–9; YHJX 18:509–15
Guizhou	Hebei	115.27	40.48	11,584	Birch bark; quivers; whistling arrows; musk aromatic	Numerous garrisons; Territory of Türk-allied warlord, Gao Kaidao, until 624; Zhang Yue built a long defensive wall in early-8th century	BP	JTS 39:1519; XTS 39:1021–2

Huaizhou	Henan	112.93	35.09	318,126			A	JTS 39:1488-9; XTS 39:1010; YHJX 16:443-6
Jizhou	Hebei	115.55	37.56	830,520			A	JTS 39:1503-4; XTS 39: 1015-6; YHJX 17:482-3
Jizhou	Tian-jin	117.40	40.04	28,521		Separated from Youzhou in 730 (see below)	B	JTS 39:1518; XTS 39:1022
Mozhou	Hebei	116.08	38.97	339,972		Separated from Yingzhou in 711 (see below)	A	JTS 39:1514; XTS 39:1021
Pingzhou	Hebei	118.75	39.72	25,086	Bear hides	Numerous garrisons	BP	JTS 39:1519; XTS 39:1021
Shenzhou	Hebei	115.53	38.01	346,472			A	JTS 39:1505; XTS 39:1016; YHJX 17:486
Tanzhou	Beijing	116.83	40.37	30,246	Musk aromatic	Numerous garrisons	BP	JTS 39:1518-9; XTS 39:1022
Weizhou	Henan	114.05	35.42	1,109,870			A	JTS 39:1493; XTS 39:1010-1; YHJX 16:458-62
Wèizhou	Hebei	115.13	36.27	284,630		Formerly included Chanzhou (see above)	A	JTS 39:1490-1; XTS 39:1012-3; YHJX 16:447-50

(continued)



Table C.5 (Continued)

<i>Tang Prefecture</i>	<i>Modern Province</i>	<i>Long. °E</i>	<i>Lat. °N</i>	<i>Pop. ca. 742</i>	<i>Pastoral or hunting tribute</i>	<i>Other indications of pastoralism, hunting, or ethnic minority peoples</i>	<i>Pref. Type</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Xiangzhou	Henan	114.34	36.09	590,196			A	JTS 39:1491; XTS 39:1012; YHJX 16:451–5
Xingzhou	Hebei	114.49	37.06	382,798			A	JTS 39:1499–1500; XTS 39:1013; YHJX 15:425–7
Yingzhou	Hebei	116.08	38.43	663,171			BP	JTS 39:1520–1; XTS 39:1022
Yíngzhou	Liaoning	120.46	41.58	3,789	Musk; [Amur] leopard tail	Seat of control of numerous bridle prefectures	B	JTS 39:1520–1; XTS 39:1022
Yizhou	Hebei	115.49	39.34	258,779			A	JTS 39:1512; XTS 39:1019; YHJX 18:515–7
Youzhou	Beijing	116.39	39.91	371,312	Composite bows ( <i>jiaogong</i> )	Site of numerous garrisons; Seat of control of numerous bridle prefectures	B	JTS 39:1515–6; XTS 39:1019–20
Zhaozhou	Hebei	114.76	37.74	395,238			A	JTS 39:1500–1; XTS 39:1016–7; YHJX 17:488
Zhenzhou (Hengzhou)	Hebei	114.56	38.14	54,543			A	JTS 39:1502; XTS 39:1014–5; YHJX 17:477

## Appendix D: Chinese Dynasties and Periods Mentioned in Text

(Ethnicity of dynasts in parentheses)

Shang Dynasty	ca. 1600–ca. 1045 BCE
Zhou Dynasty	ca. 1045–256 BCE
Western Zhou Dynasty	ca. 1045–771 BCE
Eastern Zhou Dynasty	770–256 BCE
Spring and Autumn Period	722–468 BCE
Warring States Period	403–221 BCE
Qin Dynasty	221–207 BCE
Han Dynasty	202 BCE–220 CE
Western Han Dynasty	202 BCE–9 CE
Eastern Han Dynasty	25–220
Three Kingdoms Period	220–265
Jin Dynasty	265–420
Southern Dynasties Period	420–589
Northern Dynasties Period	317–589
Sixteen Kingdoms Period	317–386
Northern Wei (Särbi) Dynasty	386–534
Eastern Wei (Särbi) Dynasty	534–550
Western Wei (Särbi) Dynasty	535–556
Northern Qi (Särbi) Dynasty	550–577
Northern Zhou (Särbi) Dynasty	557–581
Sui Dynasty	581–618
Tang Dynasty	618–690, 705–907
Zhou Dynasty of Empress Wu	690–705
Five Dynasties Period	907–960
Liao (Khitan) Dynasty	907–1125
Song Dynasty	960–1279
Northern Song Dynasty	960–1126
Xi Xia (Tangut) Dynasty	1038–1227
Jin (Jurchen) Dynasty	1115–1234
Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty	1260–1368
Ming Dynasty	1368–1644
Qing (Manchu) Dynasty	1644–1911

## Appendix E: Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang Emperors of China and Turkic Rulers of Mongolia and/or Inner Mongolia, 552–805

The following table provides a chronological reference to the contemporaneous rulers of China and Mongolia. The Northern Zhou Dynasty is included—but not its North China rival, the Northern Qi—because only rulers of the former are mentioned in the book. Moreover, the Northern Zhou also holds importance as the wellspring of the Sui and Tang dynastic founders. The sources for reigns of the China-based dynasts are Eisenberg (2008, 165) and Twitchett (ed. 1979b, xvi–xix). Turkic monarchs mainly ruled from Mongolia, but at times controlled Inner Mongolia and moved their capitals there. Dates of Sir-Yantuo and First Uighur monarchs are based upon my research in the Tang Dynasty histories. Sources for Türk and Second Uighur rulers are Beckwith (1987, 214–7), Hamilton ([1955] 1988, 139–40), Liu (1958, back matter), and Mackerras (1973, 192).

**Table E. Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang Emperors of China and Turkic Rulers of Mongolia and/or Inner Mongolia, 552–805 (Personal names in parentheses when mentioned in the text.)**

<i>China-based Dynasty</i>	<i>Posthumous or Temple Name of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Turkic Khanate</i>	<i>Short Honorific Title of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>
			First Türk	Illig Qaghan (Bumïn)	552
				Yixiji Qaghan	553
N. Zhou	Xiaomindi	557		Muqan Qaghan	553–72
	Mingdi	557–60			
	Wudi	560–78		Taspar Qaghan	572–80
	Xuandi	578–80			
	Jingdi	580–1			
Sui	Wendi (Yang Jian)	581–605		Ishbara Qaghan	581–87

Table E (continued)

<i>China-based Dynasty</i>	<i>Posthumous or Temple Name of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Turkic Khanate</i>	<i>Short Honorific Title of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>
				Chuluohou Qaghan	587–88
				Dulan Qaghan	588–99
	Yangdi	605–17		Qimin Qaghan	599–609
	Gongdi	617–18		Shibi Qaghan	610–19
Tang	Gaozu (Li Yuan)	618–26		Chuluo Qaghan	619–20
	Taizong (Li Shimin)	626–49		Illig Qaghan	621–30
			Sir-Yantuo	Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan (Yi'nan)	628–45
				Tulishi Qaghan	645
				Duomi Qaghan	645–46
			First Uighur	(Tumidu)	646–48
	Gaozong	649–83		(Porun)	649–60
				(Bisudu)	661–79
	Zhongzong [Empress Wu in control]	684		(Dujiezhi)	680–4
	Ruizong [Empress Wu in control]	684–90		(Sisheng)	684–?
Zhou	Empress Wu	690–705	Second Türk	Nishufu Qaghan	680
				Funian Qaghan	681

(continued)

Table E (continued)

<i>China-based Dynasty</i>	<i>Posthumous or Temple Name of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Turkic Khanate</i>	<i>Short Honorific Title of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>
Tang	Zhongzong restored	705–10		Ilterish Qaghan	682–93
	Shaodi (Empress Wei in control)	710		Qapaghan Qaghan	694–ca. 715
	Ruizong restored	710–2		Bilgä Qaghan	716–34
	Xuanzong	712–56		Yiran Qaghan	734
				Tängri Qaghan	735–41
				Guduo Yabghu Qaghan	742
			Basmil	Xiedieyishi Qaghan	742–44
			Second Uighur	Qutlugh Bilgä Kül Qaghan	744–47
	Suzong	756–62		Gele Qaghan	747–59
	Daizong (Li Shu)	762–79		Bögü [Tängri] Qaghan	759–79
	Dezong (Li Kuo)	779–805		Alp Qutlugh Bilgä Qaghan	779–89
				Zhongzhen Bilgä Qaghan	789–90
				(name unknown)	790
				Fengchang Qaghan	790

Table E (continued)

<i>China-based Dynasty</i>	<i>Posthumous or Temple Name of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Turkic Khanate</i>	<i>Short Honorific Title of Ruler</i>	<i>Reign</i>
				Qutlugh Bilgä Qaghan	790–95
				Ulugh Bilgä Qaghan	795–805

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## NOTES

### *Introduction*

1. According to Gould (2007, 766), “entangled histories are concerned with ‘mutually influencing,’ ‘reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions,’ and the intertwined ‘processes of constituting one another.’”
2. A few examples of chronological comparisons are Pan 1997, 24–8; Wang 2005, 144–6; Wechsler 1985.
3. *Jiu Tang shu* (Old Tang history, JTS) and *Xin Tang shu* (New Tang history, XTS), which were completed in 945 and 1060 respectively, have sections providing useful information, including descriptions of foreign peoples, biographies of frontier generals, and monographs on the bureaucracy, army, and administrative geography. Sima Guang’s chronicle, *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive mirror for the aid of government, ZZTJ), which was completed in 1084, incorporates some information, especially dates, not found in the two Tang histories. Also useful are the various medieval literary and administrative compendia such as *Tang hui yao* (Major administrative documents of the Tang, THY), *Tong dian* (Comprehensive canons of administration, TD), *Da Tang liu dian* (The six administrative canons of the great Tang, TLD), and *Cefu yuangui* (Ancient documents to aid the divining of the past, CFYG). The collected works of Zhang Jiuling (*Qujiang ji*, QJJ), who was the chief minister from 733–736, contains many imperial edicts to frontier commanders and foreign leaders. A tremendously helpful modern compendium is *Tang da zhaoling ji bubian* (Supplementary compilation of the imperial edicts of the Tang, TZLJB).
4. Contemporary Tang provincial documents were preserved in the arid environment of northwestern China at Dunhuang in Gansu (Rong 1999–2000) and Turfan in Xinjiang (Hansen 1998; Tang 1982; Zhang and Rong 1998). Since Turfan has more documents relevant to the first half of the Tang than Dunhuang, this study mainly utilizes the two editions of *Tulufan chutu wenshu* (Documents excavated at Turfan, TCWS; TCWS—plates). Tackett (2008, 102, n. 4) explains epitaphs. Two modern collections (TMC; TMCX) are the main sources of Tang epitaphs in this book. Eckfeld (2005) and Kuwayama (1991) introduce tombs and their material culture. Two recent museum catalogues emphasize external influences on Sui-Tang material culture (Juliano and Lerner, eds. 2001b; Watt and Harper, eds. 2004). Recent archaeological work in Inner Asia is deepening our knowledge of Turkic culture (Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2007; Stark 2008).
5. Arabic annals provide information on Türgish activities detailed in chapter 6 (Balādhurī; Ṭabari). Translations of the Turkic and Sogdian-language stele inscriptions contribute insights into elite Turkic ideology and historical information that is not included in the Chinese sources (Kempf 2004; Moriyasu and Ochir, eds. 1999). The sixth-century Byzantine

chronicles of Menander contain a trove of information on contemporary Eurasian diplomacy (Blockley 1985, 16–7).

6. In the 630 to 755 timeframe Tang central and local government documents related to frontier affairs are relatively copious because of political stability, prosperity, and imperial expansion. Moreover, the Turkic Orkhon inscriptions and relevant Arabic chronicles, which contain valuable information on interstate relations, date to the first half of the eighth century. The golden age of frontier-oriented Chinese textual sources ended with the An Lushan rebellion of 755, which led to Tang political and economic decline and a permanent territorial retrenchment.
7. Keightley (2000, viii) also adopts this methodology, which he calls “retrospective cultural anthropology.”
8. Goldstone (1991, 345) notes that “robust processes’ . . . took place in diverse contexts. The processes did *not* override these contexts but rather were shaped by them.”
9. Although social scientists have noted the existence of uniformities since the eighteenth century (Teggart [1941] 1977, 99–127), professional historians generally overlooked these shared aspects of culture because their research focused on particular nation-states. Bayly’s revival of the concept of uniformities is an important contribution to the comparative and world history movements that have emerged over the past several decades as alternatives to nation-based history (Grew 1980; Mazlish 2005).
10. Rossabi (1983) was the first major challenge to the “Chinese worldview.” Di Cosmo (2002a) is the only major integrationist study of the pre-imperial and early imperial period. Integrationist historians mainly focus on the external conquest dynasties of mid-imperial China (Allsen 1997, 2001, 2006; Brose 2007; Dunnell 1996; Standen 2007; Wright 2005) and the late imperial Qing Dynasty (Crossley 1999; Elliott 2001; Millward 1998; Perdue 2005; Rawski 1998).
11. South Asia, which seems to have had fewer dealings with the steppe peoples covered in this book, has been omitted. Sen (2003) studies China-India diplomacy in this period.
12. Canepa (2010a, 3–14) briefly discusses and cites some of the copious scholarship on the Silk Roads. Some authors conflate the silk and steppe roads. In academic usage “Silk Roads” has become an overused portmanteau concept—common in China, Japan, the Middle East, and the West—used to describe premodern Eurasian trade and travel networks. Originally coined in German as *Seidenstrasse*, the term has been translated into, and become popular in, multiple languages, perhaps because it conjures romantic visions of caravans laden with exotic silks and aromatic spices.
13. Talented individuals of humble background could rise to high station, which occurred most commonly in the army, but also in the bureaucracy. Even a parvenu could be transformed within a few generations into an illustrious ancestor whom descendants proudly celebrated (Chittick 2010; Grafflin 1990; Holmgren 1989; Tackett 2008).
14. Lamont and Molnár (2002, 172) use the term symbolic violence.
15. Elliott argues that there has been awareness of ethnic solidarity among groups of people throughout history as “[s]ocial organization and political assertion of difference that is perceived to inhere in culturally bounded descent-based categories” (Elliott 2006, 32–5). Crossley and Standen distinguish between premodern “cultural” and modern “ethnic” identities on the basis that the former involved shared beliefs and customs divorced from political action, while the latter was based on group solidarity that has been politicized in the modern era of nation-states (Crossley 1990; Standen 2007, 26–32). My research demonstrates that medieval literati discourses on Han identity were voiced with political intent, but ethnic solidarity never became a basis for political mobilization during the Sui and Tang empires (Skaff 2000, 2004, 2009a).
16. Although Elias’s analysis of the “ruler’s court as social configuration” remains highly influential, his argument that Louis XIV exercised absolutist power by instigating status competition among courtiers (1983, 117–45) has been challenged by revisionist historians who

- note that the ruler's aristocratic attendants could be equally manipulative (Spawforth 2007a). The Elias model also has been applied to the early Japanese state (Piggott 1997, 84–5, 138–9).
17. Brown (2007, 1–20, 101–3) summarizes major critiques of Weber's approach to China and argues that Weber partially misunderstood Chinese filial piety. Hamilton's attempts (1984, 1990) to refute the applicability of Weberian patrimonialism to China have been critiqued by Eisenberg (1998). The suitability of Elias's patrimonial model to China has been questioned because it mainly drew upon evidence from the early modern French court. For example, van Ess (2007) argues, based on a study of the Han Dynasty, that Confucian values of frugality discouraged Elias's model of status competition. In contrast, chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that Sui-Tang emperors made ostentatious ceremonial displays violating orthodox Confucian values.
  18. Sneath (2007, 10, 129, 168, 185–9, n. 13) draws upon Weberian analysis, but rejects the concept of patrimonialism when he argues that "social relations" among aristocrats bound together Turko-Mongol states. Even though the social relations Sneath describes appear to be patrimonial, he argues in a footnote that patrimonialism is inappropriate mainly because of some cases in which Turko-Mongol aristocrats formed "headless states" knitted together by horizontal alliances. Sneath's objection does not appear to be relevant to medieval Inner Asia. As future chapters will demonstrate, Turkic khanates normally had a single strong leader at the apex of the political hierarchy. Moreover, relatively fissiparous contemporary tribal unions, such as the Khitan, Qay, and Tiele—rather than being headless states—are better categorized as examples of "decentralized patrimonial domination" in which "one central official may represent the actual unity of the empire vis-à-vis the divisional rulers" (Weber 1968, 1053). For example, even though the Khitan had a tendency toward collective decision making, a qaghan always emerged through force or voting among the tribal elite (Holmgren 1986b). Moreover, the Khitan and other weaker tribal unions invariably fell under the patrimonial domination of Turkic qaghans or Sui-Tang emperors.
  19. Andrew Eisenberg (1998, 97) has offered the hypothesis that imperial China's "foreign and internal politics were structured in terms of a massive, multi-faceted patron-client relationship." His observation is most suited to Turko-Mongol khanates, but only applies with qualification to the Sui-Tang empires where legal-bureaucratic and patrimonial governance had an inverse relationship. Patrimonialism—and the related phenomenon of patronage—escalated in importance as bureaucratic oversight decreased with distance from the capital.
  20. This finding contradicts those who have argued that only Chinese dynasties founded after Inner Asian conquests produced rulers adept at managing pastoral nomadic subjects (Perdue 2005, 45).
  21. Thomas Barfield (1989, 16–9) has modified the Fletcher thesis to argue that one section of the frontier, Manchuria in the northeast, was an ecologically mixed borderland region—including steppe, forest and farmland—that linked the Chinese agricultural world to the nomadic peoples of Inner Asia. More recently, Peter Perdue's influential book (2005, 30–2) on the mid-Qing frontier, follows Barfield's thesis. James Reardon-Anderson (2005, 3–11, 97–166) argues that borderland relations with indigenous peoples had an insignificant impact on late-Qing and early twentieth century Han immigrants to Manchuria. He claims that their massive numbers and insular social networking allowed them to replicate their culture and thereby transform the frontier.
  22. For example, Fang's classification (1992) of the period of 600 to 1100 as a warm and wet stage fails to explain the fluctuations in the balance of power between Sui-Tang China and Turkic Mongolia described in the next chapter. Zhang (2006) likewise is stronger on science than history.
  23. Beckwith's work (1987) comes the closest to achieving this goal, but he excludes Mongolia and does not systematically analyze the capabilities of the great powers.

## Chapter 1

1. Twenty percent of formerly productive grasslands in North China are now classified as unusable because of desertification or conversion to agriculture (Committee 1992, 14–5).
2. Although scientists agree that there has been a trend toward increasing desertification of former pasture areas in northern China, there is not a clear consensus on the causes. Proponents of non-equilibrium ecology argue that the reason is climate change leading to a decrease in precipitation (Li et al. 2000; Wang et al. 2005). On the other hand, rangeland science emphasizes that population pressure can cause exposure of topsoil to erosion via overgrazing and improper conversion of pasture to cropland (Holzner and Kriechbaum 1998, 85–9; Zhou et al. 2002). Other studies, perhaps most persuasively, view climate change as a major underlying factor with human activity contributing toward localized intensification of desertification (Hong et al. 2003; Yang et al. 2005). Brogaard (2003, 1–16) and Ho (2000, 348–51) explain the debates over desertification.
3. An (2000) includes an excellent discussion of the problems involved in interpreting data. Hughes and Diaz (1994) provide a critical evaluation of the types of proxy evidence used to estimate historical temperatures.
4. A common misconception is that the relatively high level of genetic lactose intolerance among Asians, which averages 50 percent, precludes eating dairy. Even those with lactose intolerance can consume small quantities of fresh milk and larger amounts of fermented dairy products, such as yogurt (Huang 2002; Vesa, et al. 2000).
5. Baud (1997, 221–2) develops the concept of the borderland as a central place with its own peripheries.
6. Only the northeastern corner of the Ordos has relatively lush grasslands today (Wang et al. 2005; Zhao and Xing 1984, 245).
7. See Appendix B for citations to scholarship on imperial Chinese census data. One discrepancy becomes obvious if we compare figures for households and population in the Han and Tang censuses. The total number of northern households decreased 36.78 percent from 4,837,815 in the Han to 3,058,622 in the Tang, while population only decreased 6.41 percent from 20,457,059 to 19,145,316.
8. Chang’an was called Daxingcheng during the Sui (Wright 1978, 85–7). Luoyang became the primary capital while Empress Wu was in power (Guisso 1978, 128–9).
9. The concept of tribe has been used indiscriminately to refer to ethno-linguistic designations, such as Türks and Mongols, and social or political units ranging from as few as tens of people to as many as hundreds of thousands (Tapper 1990). Sneath (2007, 39–91) would like to dispense with the designation of tribe altogether. However, medieval Turkic usage supports retention of the term to describe social-political units of nomads (Golden 2009).
10. The Sijie tribe belonged to the Tiele tribal union in the early seventh century (JTS 199b:5343; Golden 1992, 142–6). Impoverished Sijie rendered allegiance to the Tang in northern Hedong in 630, but remained in contact with their “tribe” in Mongolia under Sir-Yantuo authority (ZZTJ 193:6082). The reference to their “tribe” is ambiguous and could refer to other Sijie or the Tiele.
11. Dobrovits (2004) makes a similar point. An example of the conceptual confusion is a description of the Western Türks. According to the *Old Tang history*, the Western Türks ruled over various races (*zhong*), including the Tardush (Duolu) and Nushibi, “similar to the Türks, only speaking slightly different languages.” The same chapter characterizes the Western Türk state (*guo*) as divided into ten tribal divisions (*bu*)—five Tardush tribes (*buluo*) and five Nushibi tribes (*buluo*)—known collectively as the Ten Clans (*xing*) or Ten Arrows, the latter accurately translating their Turkic name On Oq. Aside from calling the top of the hierarchy a state (*guo*), the Chinese terminology is hopelessly inexact. For example, the Nushibi are described as a race or tribe, while its five subordinate units are variously called tribes, tribal divisions, or clans (JTS 194b:5179, 5183–4; Beckwith 1987, 209; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 21, 34).

12. The Tiele and the Toghuz-Oghuz (Chinese: Jiuxing) tribal unions are closely related. In the Chinese sources during the seventh century there is a gradual change in usage from Tiele to Jiuxing until the former becomes rare in the eighth century. The composition of tribes in the union also experienced some alterations (JTS 195:5195–8, 199b:5343; XTS 217a:6111–4 Golden 1992, 142–6, 155–6). Jiuxing, literally meaning “Nine Surnames” in Chinese, is commonly identified as the Toghuz-Oghuz “Nine Tribes” of the Turkic Orkhon inscriptions (Golden 1972, 47–52; Pulleyblank 1956, 35–9).
13. Dobrovits (2004) argues that the Türk royal lineage at its height ruled thirty tribes that included the Türk inner tribes, the Toghuz-Oghuz, and the Western Türks.
14. The population estimate assumes that each soldier is a household head and households had an average of four persons each. The basis for these assumptions are: 1) as previously mentioned, Turko-Mongol households typically are nuclear families and all adult males serve in the military, and 2) contemporary Tang census figures show approximately four members per pastoral nomadic household (chapter 8, Table 8.1). The earlier Xiongnu Empire population on the Mongolian Plateau is also estimated at one million (Barfield 1989, 49). The number of warriors is higher than the 130,000 claimed for the early thirteenth-century Mongols (Smith 1975, 273–4).
15. Standen (2005, 171) notes the phenomenon of locally-initiated raids in North China during another period of disunity in the tenth century. Except for the civil war of the Sui-Tang transition, most recorded attacks occurred annually, or even less frequently, most likely under central leadership.
16. The Northern Song Dynasty repeated the same strategic error in 1120 when it encouraged the Jurchen to attack the Khitan Liao Dynasty from the north. The results were even more devastating because the Jurchen conquered the Liao and subsequently took North China from the Song (Franke 1994, 220–35; Twitchett and Tietze 1994, 148–51).

### Chapter 2

1. Wechsler (1980) calls the literati “Type 1 Confucians” and opposes them to pragmatic “Type 2 Confucians.” In the context of the seventh century he defines literati (Type 1) Confucians as those with one of the following three characteristics 1) a biography in the chapters devoted to Confucians (*ru*) in the *Old Tang history* (JTS) or *New Tang history* (XTS), 2) scholarly, literati, or moral roles in government, or 3) strong ethical orientation or altruistic loyalty. Wechsler’s definition generally seems valid, but is not perfect. For example, Lu Fu has a biography in one of the chapters of the *New Tang history* devoted to Confucians, but disparaged the moralistic *wenru* or “literati Confucians” (XTS 200:5705; Skaff 2009b, 176).
2. Bol (1992, 17–8, nn. 73–4) provides examples of the term *wenru* in contemporary Tang usage.
3. Examples of Tang usage of *Zhongguo*, the current name for China, can be found in JTS 61:2361; THY 73:1312–4. The idea of *Zhongguo* had earlier origins (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 1:293–5).
4. Chen Yingke (2001, 183–202) was the first to point out that the Tang House sought to obscure its Inner Asian ancestry. Sanping Chen (1996b) has done the most sophisticated study on this topic to date. Both scholars view Tang claims to Han identity to be “false,” but it is more accurate to recognize that identities are flexible and that the Tang House’s more expansive definition of “Han” resonated with many inhabitants of North China and the China-Inner Asia borderlands.
5. This observation is based on two lists of grand councilors (Guisso 1978, 167–98; Pulleyblank 1955, 192–3).
6. ZZTJ 193:6075; JTS 61:2361, 194a:5162; XTS 215a:6037. The quotation is taken from the version in Wen Yanbo’s biography (JTS 61). ZZTJ avoids a direct reference to sinicization, reading “The barbarian prisoners can be transformed into farmers.”

7. Wechsler (1985, 17, 42) interprets the “Way” to mean the “rituals and rules of etiquette.”
8. Pan (1997, 186) argues that Wen advocated a policy of “sinicization” of the Türks, but her analysis is contradictory because she also claims, more plausibly, that the majority of officials who wished to relocate the Türks south of the Yangzi sought sinicization of the Türks (see note 6 above). Wen directly opposed this group of officials in favor of allowing the Türks to keep their traditional lifestyles. Pan may have followed an abbreviated and anomalous redaction of the debate that claims Wen wanted to transform the Türks into farmers (JTS 194a:5163).
9. Chang, Chun-shu (2007, 414, n. 2) explains Zhonghua.
10. Taizong also insisted on reviewing the records of his reign (Wright 1976, 27–8).
11. Taizong consciously sought to burnish Wei Zheng’s reputation (Wechsler 1974, 197–8).
12. The extant work, most likely composed in the late ninth or tenth century based upon more rudimentary earlier versions, purports to be a dialogue between Taizong and his illustrious general responsible for the conquest of the Türks, Li Jing. The author or authors demonstrate close familiarity with military affairs (Sawyer and Sawyer 2007, 313, n. 4).
13. People of the privileged class received the lightest sentences and the inferior class received the harshest (Johnson 1979, 11–2, 23–31).
14. Johnson’s translations of ethnic terms have been modified here and in subsequent quotations to conform to the standards of this book.
15. After the Tang, only the Song Dynasty used bridle-halter nomenclature, but later dynasties had somewhat similar administrative arrangements under different names (Yang 1968, 31–2; Hucker 1985:132).
16. For the distribution of barbarian female linen, see Schafer and Wallacker 1957–58, map XX under the name *Hu* woman linen.
17. 64TAM29:17(a), 95(a), 108(a), 107, 24, 25 in TCWS 7:88–94; TCWS—plates 3:346–50; Yoshida and Kageyama 2005, 306. Kang Aliao’s residency in two prefectures was unusual and technically illegal under Tang rule.
18. Ethnicity probably is mentioned because, as noted previously, foreigners only had recourse to Tang courts when involved in litigation with people of different backgrounds (66TAM61: 17(b), 23(b), 27/2, 27/1(b), 22(b), 26(b), 27/5(b), 24(b), 16(b), 25 in TCWS 6:470–9 TCWS—plates 3:242–7; Arakawa 2005, 237–8).
19. A market register was meant to control corruption by setting the prices that government offices were permitted to remit for goods at local bazaars (Ikeda 1992, 446; Naitō 1960, 52–89; Twitchett 1966, 213; Trombert and La Vaissière 2007, 4–5).
20. Chinese sources describe the Chumi as being on the route to Kucha from the Jungarian Basin (ZZTJ 199:6262; JTS 3:6; XTS 2:47, 110:4115; CFYG 985:18b–19b).
21. According to Duara (1995, 17, 33–50), the quoted text represents two of the three legs of “Enlightenment History” that Chinese nationalist historians favored in the twentieth century. The third leg was the idea of history as a linear and progressive evolution toward a better future. Although this point is well-taken, Duara overlooks that Enlightenment History became popular in China partly because of elements it shared with traditional Confucian historiography.

### Chapter 3

1. I have modified M. G. Smith’s definition quoted in Newbury (2003, 8).
2. As in Eastern Eurasia, medieval northern European vassals expected their lords to generously distribute rewards and divide war booty (Althoff 2004, 106–7, 122).
3. Ch’ü (1972, 127–35) clearly has “client” in mind in his translations of “guest” (*ke* or *binke*) and “guest supported by someone” (*shike*) to describe “adherents” whom the “host” was expected “to provide lodging, food, clothing, and even carriages” in return for “occasional service.” Ebrely (1983, 534) uses “client” to describe various Eastern Han terms current



among the educated elite, including “disciple” (*dizi*). Northern and Southern Dynasties historians have formulated designations for rural clients that include “supported visitors” (*jike*), “tenant clients” (*tianke*) and “bound retainers” or “private troops” (*buqu*) (Tang 1990; Crowell 1990, 177).

4. Chen Yinke (2001, 183–203) hypothesized that court factions were geographically based. Howard Wechsler (1973, 202) effectively disproves Chen’s geographical thesis and perceptively notes that Tang factional “allegiances were in a highly fluid state and essentially personal,” but does not offer an explanation for the prevalence of factionalism. Andrew Eisenberg (1994, 1997, 2002–3, 2008) describes Tang elite politics as a manifestation of Weberian patrimonialism and argues that early Tang emperors consciously manipulated factional rivalries. His work has advanced our knowledge of the causes of conflict at court, but his focus on the imperial center leaves unexplained the broader phenomenon of patronage. Victor Mair (1978, 1984) and Oliver Moore (1999, 2004, 139–152) examine the impact of patron-client ties on elite literature and rituals. They stress structural factors as primary causes of the phenomenon. One such factor was that because there were too many men chasing too few positions in the civil service, the patron was the essential prerequisite to an appointment.
5. ZS 50:911; SS 84:1864–74; Drompp 1991, 97–9; Pan 1997, 100–7; Golden 1992, 131–2. Yoshida’s translation of the Sogdian-language Bugut inscription describes Taspar’s son “Umna Qaghan” claiming legitimate rule (Yoshida and Moriyasu 1999, 124). Kljastornyj and Livsic (1972, 74) identify the successor as Ishbara Qaghan, who was Taspar’s nephew. I have followed Yoshida, however, based on his stellar reputation as a Sogdian linguist.
6. The titles *yajiang* and *yaya* are poorly understood. Hucker (1985) does not list the positions. Des Rotours (1974, 225) only mentions *yaya*, which he defines as a guard at an administrative office. A literal translation of *yajiang* is “staff general,” but because the title *yaya* connotes that Geshu had responsibilities for guard duties, another possible translation of *yajiang* is “general of the headquarters bodyguard.” Either type of position would have stationed Geshu with Wang where they might have formed a strong personal relationship.
7. The anecdote demonstrates that Fumeng Lingcha distinguished himself ethnically from Koguryans, but since he does not have a biography, his self-identity is unknown. Fumeng was a Qiang surname (YHXX 2:263), but sometimes he was known by the more sinified name, Ma Lingcha.
8. Beckwith (2009, 392–3) attempts to reconstruct the Turkic and Mongolic forms of *yeluohe*.
9. Daizong’s accession 144 years into the Tang Dynasty marked the first time that the eldest son of an emperor came to power. Primogeniture was the norm for the next three reigns, but only functioned intermittently after eunuchs gained control of power in the ninth century (Twitchett, ed. 1979b, xvii).
10. Cen’s data is based upon textual sources that contain discrepancies. Ecsedy points out that a full archaeological excavation of the Zhaoling complex is needed to accurately tally the number of tombs and determine the backgrounds of those who accompanied Taizong in death.
11. ZJTJ reads *zhongjun*, while JTS and XTS say “dedicated to his dynastic state” (*xuguo*). The former reading seems more plausible in light of Heli’s argument that the tribe should recompense Taizong, their monarch, for his generosity.
12. From the point of view of the emperors, it was advantageous to elevate Qibi Heli as a moral exemplar who placed loyalty to a sovereign above all else. The Qibi descendants living in the Tang Empire also would have benefited from promoting their progenitor as a man who was heroically loyal to the famous emperor Taizong. Court historians who preserved Qibi’s biography may have sought to burnish Taizong’s image as a sagacious emperor who could manage his Turko-Mongol clients. In contrast they depict Xuanzong as naively mishandling the disloyal An Lushan.



## Chapter 4

1. Crossley (1999, 11-2) defines simultaneous kingship as “imperial utterances in more than one language . . . as simultaneous expression of imperial intentions in multiple cultural frames” in order to convey “the righteousness of the emperor.”
2. Tekin’s Turkic romanization has been modified for continuity throughout the book.
3. Khazanov 1994, 162; Ōsawa 2006, 221–4. Klyashtornyi (2004, 37–8) defines slave tribes as those that were forcibly subjugated and deprived of indigenous leadership, such as the Kirghiz after the Türks suppressed a revolt.
4. Byzantine rulers also adopted this usage in diplomatic discourse with Iran (Canepa 2009, 127).
5. There is no direct evidence that Tibet was formally designated an equal adversary. Kaneko Shūichi (1988, 77, 97–8) argues that the Tang regarded Tibet as an equal by 781 based on diplomatic usage in Chinese correspondence.
6. The Roman Principate and Han Dynasty imposed direct sovereignty on interior territory, but ruled indirectly through various types of clients on the exterior (Chun-shu Chang 2007, 20, 259; Di Cosmo 2002a, 218–21; Luttwak 1976, 4, 30, 60).
7. Historians who share this notion are as diverse as the institutionalist, Fairbank (1968, 2–10) and the postmodernist, Hevia (1995, 29–56, 116–33).
8. SS 84:1868; ZZTJ 176:5475–6. The translation is based upon the interpretation of Pelliot (1929, 209–10) and Mori (1981, 72–3) that *cong tiansheng* and *xiansheng* are calques of Turkic expressions.
9. After Wendi’s death, Qimin Qaghan continued to refer to the deceased emperor by the same title (SS 84:1873–1874).
10. Liu (1958, 60, n. 336) suggests that the Chinese *moyuan* might be rendered as *bayan* in Turkic. Luo (2009, 123–7) supports Liu’s hypothesis with other examples of *moyuan* in Chinese sources and proposes a meaning of prosperous.
11. Wendi also used the title “Bodhisattva Son of Heaven” (Wright 1957, 98).
12. The meaning and etymology of the epithet *tuli* is unknown, but it also was used by the subordinate Tuli Qaghan of the First Türk Empire (Chapter 8; Luo 2009, 16).
13. Dragon’s Son Liu and his sons are identified as Lishihu. According to Hu Sanxing’s commentary (ZZTJ 188:5856), Lishihu and Jihu are equivalent.
14. The newly established Tang dynasty carried out similar measures (Wechsler 1985, 55–77, 107–12, 211–23).
15. I have followed Yoshida’s translation of Sogdian (1999) rather than Kljastornyj and Livsic (1972); see chapter 3, note 5. The contentious *quriltai* of 581 with multiple claimants to rule, described in the previous chapter, led to the fissure of the Türk Empire into hostile eastern and western khanates.
16. Han and Tang accession ceremonies actually shared all of these characteristics, including ritual petitioning of the prospective ruler, rewards, banquets, and issuance of laws, but also included distinctive Confucian elements such as the transference of the imperial seals, and choosing a calendar, and reign era-name (Wechsler 1985, 1, 80–101).
17. Tang sources describing gatherings of the tribal leadership of the Mongolian Plateau usually mention a total of several thousand chiefs. The number seems to be a convention, but may approximately represent the total leadership of the khanate down to the level of camp headmen.
18. See chapter 5 for a full discussion of credentials.
19. Antonino Forte (1992, 231) has even argued that this represented the empress’s attempt to reduce “international” conflicts “through diplomacy and the diffusion of Buddhist pacifist ideology.” If this was the case, the policy vis-à-vis the Türks was an abject failure (chapter 1).
20. *Tai fuma* apparently is derived from the title of husbands of imperial princesses, “commandant-escort” (*fuma duwei*), sometimes abbreviated as *fuma* (Hucker 1985, 219; Luo 1990–4,

- 12:1817; Rotours 1974, 374). The prefix *tai* may allude to Qapaghan's role as father of the consorts because *tai* can indicate a superior rank in generation (Hucker 1985, 478).
21. See letters to the Tang court from the Türk Qaghan, the Yabghu of Tukhārīstān, and the King of Shāsh that are dated respectively to the years 741, 727, and 741 (CFYG 971:13b, 999:17b–18a; XTS 221b:6246; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 142, 206–7).
  22. Tekin (1968, 237, 272) translates “Tabgach Qaghan” as “Chinese Emperor.”
  23. When a Tang envoy was visiting the camp of the Uighur qaghan in 758, the latter referred to Tang Suzong as “Heavenly Qaghan.” In response, the Tang emissary called the Tang emperor “Son of Heaven” (JTS 195:5205; XTS 217a:6116; Mackerras 1973, 64–5).
  24. There may have been a third Tängri Qaghan reigning from 805 to 808, but the Tang sources are confused and Hamilton is uncertain about the proper transcription of the title from Chinese to Turkic (Hamilton [1955] 1988, 140–1; Mackerras 1973, 187–90).
  25. Ashide Yuanzhen sometimes is identified as the same person as the sage Türk minister Tonyuquq, but Luo (2009, 214–24) casts doubt upon this claim.
  26. The Tibetan ruler's title of *btsanpo* means “Son of Heaven” (Beckwith 1987, 14, n. 10).

### Chapter 5

1. Textual sources from pre-Islamic Iran have been lost. The Eastern Roman court developed elaborate ceremonies relatively late, so it is not surprising that codification did not begin until the sixth century (Cameron 1987, 126; Canepa 2009, 122–53; Smith 2007, 170; Wiesehöfer 2007).
2. The translations of *dianke shu* and *zhuke si* are rendered more literally than Wang's and Hucker's (1985) to better convey the patrimonial-ritualistic connotations of the terms.
3. The Chinese words, *bin* and *ke*, have a broader meaning than their English equivalents. *Bin* also can mean “to submit” or “submission” (Wang 2005, 121; Hevia 1995, 117).
4. TLSY 8:177–8, art. 88; Johnson 1997, 56; Wang 2005, 101. Johnson and Wang translate *fanke* as “foreigner,” but clearly “visitor” (*ke*) in this context is a euphemism for diplomatic envoys rather than a general reference to all foreigners visiting the empire. See Hu Sanxing's definition (ZZTJ 198:6242) of the closely related compound, *huke*, as “visitors from the four barbarians proffering tribute at court.” Buttressing this interpretation, *The Tang Code* mentions that this article originated in the “Ordinances of the Bureau of Visitor Reception” (*zhuke shi*), one of the governmental agencies handling diplomatic visitors. Johnson and Wang mistranslate *zhuke shi* as “Ordinances Governing Foreigners,” which is not a viable rendering because ordinances only regulated the affairs of governmental agencies (Twitchett 1957, 29–34).
5. An envoy who was returning to “Western Barbarian City” (Hucheng) stopped at Gaochang County, Xizhou around 700 (64 TAM35:38(a) in TCWS 7:466; TCWS—plates 3:531). An emissary and chiefs made a similar stop in 754 (73TAM506:4/32–4 in TCWS 10:94; TCWS—plates 4:448).
6. A Japanese source of disputed reliability claims that Japan and Silla were accorded the first and second ranks in a New Year's ceremony of 725 (Wang 2005, 131–3, n. 173, 229–32).
7. ZZTJ 196:6164; Abramson 2008, 187; Beckwith 1987, 24. In another version of the anecdote, Taizong insisted that Mgar marry the imperial clanswomen and they had five sons (JTS 196a:5222–3).
8. The propagandistic nature of the painting is demonstrated by the fact that the artist, Yan Liben, “bemoaned his cooptation at the behest of Taizong” (Eckfeld 2005, 66).
9. THY 20:395–6; Eckfeld 2005, 17, n. 30. Sima Guang (ZZTJ 199:6269) explains Gaozong's order as a response to the request of Taizong's loyal Turkic generals, Ashina She'er and Qibi Heli, to commit suicide at his grave. The statues were supposed to substitute for these still-valuable generals. The list of names in THY, which is partially corrupted, includes Ashina She'er, but not Qibi. The category of “voluntary submissions” runs a wide gamut, including

- some rather tenuous claims. For example, at Taizong's tomb, the category would have to include Ashina She'er, Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo, who originally received Tang investiture as independent ruler of Mongolia and later became an enemy, and the Tibetan Btsanpo, who agreed to marriage relations with the Tang, but not investiture.
10. Gaozong's trip began on December 10, 665, in the eastern capital of Luoyang, and his party took forty days to travel the approximately 450 kilometers east to Mount Tai. After a forty-day stay in the vicinity of the mountain to carry out the ritual and engage in other festivities, the return to Luoyang required fifty-one more days because of stops to worship at temples of Confucius and Laozi (ZZTJ 201:6345–7; Wechsler 1985, 167). Xuanzong and his retinue moved faster, perhaps due to the more tenuous foreign policy situation, departing Luoyang on November 20, 725, and reaching Mount Tai twenty-five days later. Their sojourn at Mount Tai only lasted eight days. The return journey to Luoyang was mainly via boat and only took eleven days, including a stop at the Confucius Temple (ZZTJ 212:6766–8).
  11. The supply chains are not described in detail, but probably resembled those of better-documented eighteenth-century Qing Dynasty imperial tours (Michael G. Chang 2007, 114–59).
  12. The tent could hold more than two thousand people and Alexander sat in the middle, on what is described as a divan or throne of gold (Spawforth 2007b, 94–7, 112–20).
  13. The largest was the “ancient tent” with a height of nine meters, and width of six and one half meters (XTS 44:1865; TLD 11:20b–21b; Rotours 1974, 231).
  14. Tang and Sogdian craftsmen are known to have been employed to build the smaller city of Bay Baliq (Moriyasu 1999, 185).
  15. After earlier evolution of forms, sixth-century diplomatic visitors at both courts made full prostrations, touching the head to the carpet in a motion similar to the kowtow (Canepa 2009, 149–53).
  16. Originally appeared in Xinjiang 1975, 91. Wang and Qi (1995, plates: pp. 82, 175) identify and provide other references.
  17. The Shatuo Türks of North China in the tenth century and the Ottomans of Anatolia in the fifteenth century also used credential arrows (Eberhard 1965, 153–4).
  18. Around the same time, Illig Qaghan sent a polychrome silk caftan to the Northern Hedong warlord Yuan Junzhang (JTS 55:2255; XTS 92:3805; ZZTJ 190:5973).
  19. Drums and standards were bestowed upon the Sir-Tardush in 628 (JTS 199b:5344; ZZTJ 192:6061), the Tuyuhun in 636 (JTS 198:5300; XTS 221a:6226; ZZTJ 194:6117), and the Türks in 639 (JTS 194a:5163–4, 199b:5344; XTS 215a:6039; ZZTJ 193:6148–9).
  20. The Tang official kept the right half of the tally. The court kept two matching left pieces, one to send with a summons to court, and the other stored at the palace gate to authorize admittance to imperial audiences. Turtle tallies replaced fish during Empress Wu's Zhou Dynasty (Rotours 1952, 4–15, 87–9, 130–4).
  21. Taizong bestowed a treasure sword, captured after the Tang conquest of Gaochang, upon the Türk general Ashina She'er, who served on the campaign (JTS 190:3289). Other known recipients of treasure swords were Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan of the Sir-Yantuo (JTS 199b:5344) and a Koguryan elite (XTS 110:4123).
  22. Western Zhou kings might bestow caps, jackets, kneepads, and shoes, but not belts (Li 2008, 257, 262).
  23. The Tang court also received treasure belts as tribute from other Inner Asian states (XTS 221a:6241, 221b:6253).
  24. Another example is a Khitan elite, appointed Assault Resisting Garrison Vice-Commandant (rank of 5b2, 6a1 or 6a2 depending on garrison size), who received a crimson caftan of fifth rank and silver belt of sixth-rank officials. For the standard sumptuary regulations, see XTS 24:529; Niida 1933, 461.
  25. Empress Wu was one of the greatest ritual innovators in Chinese history, and her ceremonies are notable for grandiosity and inclusion of foreigners (Forte 1988, 233–43; McMullen 1987, 227–8), but have received less attention in this chapter because Inner Asian elements are lacking.

26. The Song ritual procession to the Grand Ancestral Altar was grandiose, but the emperor was remote in a carriage, and foreigners were not included (Ebrey 1999b).

### Chapter 6

1. For example, the Byzantines considered the Lazi to be their subjects and Suania in turn to be the subjects of the Lazi. Suania sent annual tribute to the Lazi. A Byzantine ambassador described the Lazi as “the slave of our slave [Suania].” When a king of Lazi died, Suania invested the successor after having gained the approval of the Byzantine emperor (Blockley 1985, 85).
2. Weber (1968, 1070) considered “feudal” governance to be an advanced type of patrimonialism because of formalized ties between ruler and adherents. More recently, historians have argued that medieval northern Europe had a transition from informal to formal, legally defined feudal dyads. In the early medieval period the bonds between lords and vassals were customary with vague rights and obligations. By the twelfth century their relationships were cemented in ceremonies that included lords granting fiefs in return for oaths of fidelity from vassals (Bouchard 1998, 43; Althoff 2004, 7–10, 102–35). Reynolds (1994, 11–4, 370–3) questions the existence of formal feudal institutions, but she recognizes the increasing prevalence of formal commendation rituals in the twelfth century.
3. Li Yuan (the future Gaozu) sent a letter to Shibi Qaghan in 617 in the form of a memorial of an official rather than a decree of a monarch, which implicitly recognized the Türks as the superior party (Li 1965, 214–46).
4. Hucker (1985, 246, 412, 466) defines *daxingtai* as “Branch Department of State Affairs,” which was the headquarters of a semi-autonomous regional governor or viceroy. My translation of “grand viceroy” interprets *daxingtai* to mean the person in charge of the branch department.
5. Sulu and the Sasanian court in exile had been collaborating since at least 719 when they sent a joint diplomatic mission to the Tang court (CFYG 971:3a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 37).
6. The Turkic rendering of Saqal follows Beckwith (1987, 74, n. 111).
7. Türgish leaders were invested as “Qaghan of the Ten Tribes” in 744, 749 and 753 (XTS 215b:6068; ZJTJ 216:6897, 6919; CFYG 965:2b–3a, 4a; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 85; [1904] 1969, 71–2, 81).
8. The Turkic rendering of Ocirlıq follows Golden’s modification (1992, 139) of Beckwith’s interpretation (1987, 65, n. 70).
9. Beckwith most likely is mistaken to construe Sulu’s “request” for Süyāb as a conquest during a time of otherwise warming relations (Beckwith 1987, 90; Wang 1991, 99–101). By recognizing Süyāb as the Türgish capital, Xuanzong effectively renounced Tang claims to a former garrison that probably had been under Türgish occupation since 703 (XTS 221a:6230; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 113–4). Two sources claim that Sulu was invested as qaghan in 715 (JTS 194b:5191; CFYG 979:6a), but this dating must be wrong because an imperial edict of July 717 states explicitly that “Sulu previously was a grand general and has not been invested [as qaghan]” (CFYG 157:18a–b; QTW 40:17a).
10. al-Balālādhurī, 427; al-Ṭabarī 2:1420–32; Powers 1989, 152–62; Beckwith 1987, 93–4; Gibb [1923] 1970, 61–2. The Arabic histories refer to Sulu as “Khāqān” (qaghan) and the Türgish as “Türks.” The latter is a common Arabic designation for all pastoral nomads regardless of tribal name (Boyle 1960, 4:915; Frenkel 2005, 204–5).
11. Beckwith (1987, 108–10) incorrectly places Tibetans among the Türgish army (Skaff 1998b, 167–8, n. 68).
12. ZJTJ 209:6625–6; JTS 97:3045; XTS 122:4363; Chavannes 1969, 185. My translation is according to the version in ZJTJ. Chavannes translates JTS.
13. In the 730s Shazhou’s Doulu Army (Doulu *jun*) had around 4,500 troops and Guazhou’s Moli Army (Moli *jun*) had 5,000 (YHJX 40:1017–20; XTS 40:1044–8; TLD 5:21a).

14. Ecsedy (1984, 280) describes the mourning ritual.
15. The use of beacon towers among pastoral nomads has not been studied, but this case probably represents an interesting example of technological transmission. Chains of beacon towers, which stretched from the frontier to the capital, were a well-known component of imperial Chinese defense systems. The towers transmitted news of attacks by emitting signals of smoke during the day and fire at night (Cheng 1990).
16. For an explanation of the changing nomenclature, see chapter 1, note 12.
17. Mid-eighth century Uighur inscriptions refer to two earlier Uighur khanates, the second of which was involved with the Tang (Tabgach) and lasted an improbably long seventy or eighty years. Klyashtorny renders the relevant passage in the Tes inscription as “they rose against the Tabgach, but they were annihilated. [Then] the Uighur Qaghans sat on the throne for ten years, [then] seventy years more” (1983, 148, 153). Osawa’s translation (1999, 160–1) says Uighur qaghans “were reconciled to China [Tabgach]” and reigned for seventy years. The Tariat inscription refers to a second dynasty that lasted eighty years, but does not mention the Tang (Katayama 1999, 171).
18. JTS 103:3191–2, 195:5198; XTS 133:4547–8, 217a:6114; ZZTJ 213:6779–80. It is unknown whether the Tongra who migrated to Hedong were the same ones who revolted in Hexi in 685 or a different tribal faction.
19. These sources claim that the Chuyue suffered from a Tibetan attack north of the Tianshan range, but this seems improbable. Around this time, there was a change in the Tibetan rulership and no Tibetan campaigns are known (Beckwith 1987, 78). More likely the attack is connected to the Türk campaign against the Türgish in 711 (see Table 1.4 in chapter 1).
20. These observations about the Sui-Tang usage of covenant (*meng*) and pact (*yue*) are based on the author’s analysis of the evidence presented in the main text.
21. The Egyptian-Hittite bilingual treaty of 1258 BCE is the earliest known in Afro-Eurasia (Grimal 1994, 257).
22. As early as the seventh century BCE, the borderland Di people and the Chinese Warring States shared the custom of exchanging noble hostages (Di Cosmo 1999a, 948). Imperial Roman hostages taken from outer clients were the sons of nobles who received Latin education, but the practice existed even earlier in the fifth century BCE (Allen 2006, 1–24).
23. During the Sui-Tang transition, the Türks took a son of the borderland warlord, Li Zihe, as a hostage (JTS 56:2282). Later the Mongols took hostages (Allsen 1987, 73–4; Yang 1952, 512–3).

### Chapter 7

1. Holmgren (1990–1, 32, 46–7, 77–8) and Pan (1997a, 98, 126) discuss Confucian taboos against marriages with foreigners.
2. Bride exchanges among the inner tribes also occurred earlier among the Särbi and later among the Mongols (Holmgren 1990–1, 60–2, nn. 61–2).
3. Confucian moralists condemned widow remarriage from early in history, but their admonitions were largely ignored until late imperial times. The Song was the first dynasty to adopt policies promoting widow chastity (Ebrey 1993, 194–200; Hinsch 2002, 43).
4. Taizong married two of his sisters to Zhishi Sili and Ashina She’er (Wang 1999, 236–7, 247–8), and married a stepdaughter to Ashina Zhong (TMC 1:601–3) and a “District Princess” to Qibi Heli (ZZTJ 194:6115–6; JTS 109:3291; XTS 110:4117–8). District Princesses were the daughters of imperial princes (Rotours 1974, 46).
5. The king of Farghānah (Table 7.1.C) is categorized as Turko-Mongol because he had a Turkic name and title, Arslan Tarqan.
6. The table is adapted from Wang n.d.; Kuang 1935, 65–7; Pan 1997a, 130–1; Wang 1999, 290–1. Gaozu’s pre-dynastic match with Shibi Qaghan of the Türks has been added (JTS 194a:5153; XTS 215a:6028; CFYG 978:19b). The bride’s rank determined her status and salary in the official system, and roughly indicates the prestige of the husband.

7. Table adapted from data in Pan 1997a, 111–22; Wang 1999, 292–4. The following failed negotiations have been added: Tang-Tuyuhun attempts to arrange a marriage around 630 (JTS 198:5298; XTS 221a:6224–5; ZZTJ 194:6106–7; Molè 1970, 49) and Tang-Türk negotiations of 622, 623, 624, 629, 718 and 721, which are discussed below (JTS 194a:5156, 5158, 199b:5344; XTS 215a:6031; ZZTJ 190:5955, 5973, 191:5992, 193:6065).
8. Xuanzong's two exceptions to this pattern of sending wives to intermediate powers were brides bestowed upon the minor oasis states of Farghānah and Khotan in 744 in exchange for help in defeating the Türgish in 739 (ZZTJ 215:6862; XTS 221b:6250; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 149; Kuang 1935, 47–8).
9. XTS 217a:6123; ZZTJ 233:7504–5; Mackerras 1973, 97, n. 166. Tang sources do not provide any information on the earlier marriage pact.
10. The table is compiled from data in Wang 1999, 241–6, 250–1, 261–3. For the backgrounds of warlords, see the progenitors of the following family lines: Zhang Xiaozong (JTS 141:3854), Tian Chengsi (JTS 141:3837; XTS 210:5923), Wang Wujun (JTS 142:3871, 3884; XTS 211:5959), Liu Chang (JTS 152:4070; XTS 170:5173), Yu Di (JTS 156:4129), Song Kan (ZZTJ 256:8338).
11. *Gongzhu* was the title normally given to an emperor's daughters (Rotours 1974, 45).
12. Only ZZTJ provides a coherent narrative of these events that exposes Taizong's duplicity (ZZTJ 196:6179–80, 197:6199–6202; JTS 194b:5345–6; XTS 217b:6136–7; CFYG 978:22a–23a).
13. The translation draws upon both of these Song Dynasty sources.
14. If the date of 724 is correct, CFYG mistakenly calls the qaghan Bögö Chor (*Mo chuo*), which was the pre-qaghanal name and title of Qapaghan Qaghan (d. ca. 715).
15. Some of the sources mention an improbably high estimate of five million strings (JTS 195:5210–1; XTS 217a:6127, 217b:6129; Mackerras 1973, 113–5). The five million figure would have been a third of annual Tang revenue in 780. The exchange rate around the year 810 for one bolt of silk tabby was eight hundred bronze coins, which was 0.8 strings of cash (Peng 1994, 293, 295).
16. TLSY 12:237, 239, arts. 157, 160; Johnson 1997, 130–3; Waltner 1990, 24–8, 48–81. *The Tang Code* (TLSY) uses the term *yangzi* “raised son” to describe an adoption in which the son takes the father's surname, but in other sources *yangzi* sometimes refers to foster relationships. The term *jiazi* “false son” also appears to indicate both types of relationships.
17. The sole exception was the Northern Zhou Qianjin Princess (Table 7.4: #1) whom Sui Wendi transformed into his adopted daughter, mentioned earlier in the chapter.
18. The table was compiled based on a search of the terms *cixing* and *cishi* in the full text databases of the *History of the Sui*, *Old Tang history*, *New Tang history*, and *Comprehensive mirror for the aid of government* (Gugong 1999; Zhongyang yanjiu yuan 2000). The table likely underreports cases of imperial surname bestowals due to loss of data over the centuries, and the inability of the database search to detect bestowals not designated by the above Chinese terms. Wang Tongling's table (n.d., 20–2) overreports the number of bestowals on foreigners and ethnic minorities because most of his data consist of inherited surnames.
19. Li Zhefu's surname must have been bestowed during Gaozong's reign at some point between the conquest of the Western Türks in 657 and Li Zhefu's appearance in the historical record in 679 (JTS 5:105, 84:2802; XTS 180:4087, 215b:6064; ZZTJ 201:6332, 202:6391; Skaff 2009b, 185–6).
20. Empress Wei, the alleged power behind the throne, bestowed her Wei surname on a client in 705 (Table 7.4: #31). Xuanzong gave the Li surname to his sororal cousin, Xue Chongjian (Table 7.4: #32), who was the Taiping Princess's son. When Xuanzong came to power in a coup, Xue Chongjian was the only one of her children who was spared because of his previous attempts to dissuade her from involvement in court intrigue.
21. The Qibi tribe lived in Liangzhou in Hexi (JTS 40:1641), which the Türks raided in 696 (Appendix A).



22. When Qapaghan Qaghan invaded Hebei in 698, the empress issued an edict changing his Turkic name from Bögö Chor (*Mo chuo*) to Zhan *chuo* or “Beheaded Chor” (JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6046; ZZTJ 206:6533). The empress also bestowed inauspicious names on domestic political enemies (Rothschild 2008b, 39, 118).
23. Madam Li, a Tang princess, requested the Wu surname (Table 7.4: #17). An Baoyu (Table 7.4: #37), who came from a family with a long history of service to the Tang, was embarrassed by his An surname after the An Lushan rebellion.
24. The translation is Drompp’s (JTS 195:5213; XTS 217b:6149; THY 100:1785; Drompp 2005b, 126; Wechsler 1979b, 150–151). The Tang genealogy, commonly believed to have been falsified, traced its line through Li Bing, who had founded the Western Liang Dynasty (400–422), and who in turn claimed to be a descendent of Li Guang. The Kirghiz asserted that their ancestor was Li Guang’s grandson, Li Ling, who had surrendered to the Xiongnu in 99 BCE and spent the remainder of his life as governor of the Kirghiz.
25. The dating is based on the ages of the Bilgä Qaghan (27) and Kül Tegin (26) at the time of the attack.
26. Even though Monguors speak a Mongolic dialect, three chiefs and their clans claimed descent from the Turkic Shatuo (Krader 1963, 287–91; Schram 1932, 12; Schram and Lattimore 1954, 31–2, 40–1).
27. These scholars argue that fictive kinship was prevalent in Inner Asia, the Sārbi ruled over North China for several centuries, and adoptions from outside of a lineage violated Tang law and Confucian custom (Dai 2000; Dien 1977; Mao 2001, 52–4). The latter point seems unlikely because Chinese laws and customs regulating adoption have been ignored throughout history (Waltner 1990, 144–7). Even Tang eunuchs who lived in the imperial palace regularly ignored administrative statutes regulating adoptions of sons (Wang 2004, 181).
28. Two Tangut tribal leaders were awarded surnames during the Tang, Tabgach Chici around 635 (Table 7.4: #13) and Tabgach Sigong in 882 (XTS 221a:6218). Only the latter seems to have played a role in the historical memory of the Tangut by the eleventh century (Dunnell 1996, 37–44).
29. Wechsler (1985, 136) coined this term to describe Tang legitimization based on political descent from past dynasties.
30. The Song Dynasty historian, Sima Guang (ZZTJ 216:6905–6), rejects the claim that An’s bodyguards were foster sons because they were impossibly numerous. Robert des Rotours (1962, 102–3), suggests that it may represent an otherwise unknown foreign custom. Etienne de la Vaissière (2007, 79–82) proposes that it is a Sogdian practice.
31. The data, derived from Table 7.4, break down as follows, designated by the table row numbers. Khitan, Qay, and Malgal of Manchuria: #11 (valor), #15 (submission), #16 (submission), #29 (valor), #33 (submission), #34 (valor), #39 (submission), #40 (unknown), #41 (patrimonial reward); Turko-Mongols from other sectors of China-Inner Asia borderlands: #7 (valor), #14 (investiture), #30 (unknown), #35 (submission); other borderland peoples: #8 (submission), #12 (unknown), #13 (submission), #36 (submission); North-western Han: #2 (submission), #4 (submission), #10 (valor), #37 (requested name change); Northeastern Han: #3 (submission), #5 (submission), #6 (submission), #9 (submission), #38 (valor).
32. Gaozu proposed marriage alliances to the Türks in the early 620s, before Tang dynastic power was consolidated. The Türks only managed to bestow brides on weaker rulers in North China during the politically divided Northern Dynasties. Empress Wu agreed to accept brides for her grandsons of the Li lineage who were in line to inherit the throne, but the marriages did not take place.
33. Gaozu’s marriage relations with Shibi Qaghan may have involved a true daughter, but the evidence is contradictory (Table 7.1).
34. Holmgren has tried to explain the propensity of brides to go from China to the steppe as the product of differences in marriage customs. China-based rulers took only one wife, while



Turko-Mongol men could take multiple wives (Holmgren 1990–1, 75–6). She also notes with greater justification that it would have been considered too dangerous to have a foreign-born empress, since the imperial wife often played a crucial role in governmental affairs. However, she ignores that emperors of China could have accepted women from the steppe as concubines for themselves or official wives for members of the extended imperial family. The latter was the model for the unconsummated engagements between Qapaghan Qaghan and the Zhou-Tang courts in the early eighth century (Table 7.2) and common in domestic political marriages (Table 7.3).

### Chapter 8

1. Barfield (1989, 148), who is one of the leading figures of the material school, uses the quotation to support his thesis.
2. Ashina She'er fled westward (Skaff 2009b, 181). Tuli Qaghan submitted to Taizong out of fear of Illig's wrath (JTS 194a:5158, 5160–1; XTS 215a:6038; ZZTJ 192:6049).
3. Hayashi (1990) provides evidence of plunder taken from China. Bilgä Qaghan's spoils of war in attacking Turkic tribes to reunite the Second Türk Empire were herds, horses, wives, and children (Tekin 1968, 278). The Uighur took "livestock, moveable possessions, (unmarried) girls and widows" from rebellious Oghuz and Tartar tribes (Moriyasu 1999, 183).
4. Lindner 1981, 4. Raiding profited Türk tribesmen more than their ruler, according to a Tang envoy in 622 trying to persuade Illig Qaghan to halt attacks in favor of marriage to a Tang princess that would fill his personal treasury with gifts (ZZTJ 190:5954–5).
5. Bagha Tarqan Kül Chor (Arabic: Kürşül), leader of the Türgish in the late 730s, paid each of his fifteen thousand soldiers a monthly salary of one piece (*shiqqah*) of silk worth twenty-five Muslim silver *dirham* coins (al-Ṭabari 2:1689; Hillenbrand 1989, 25). Bagha Tarqan's predecessor, Sulu, may have paid salaries too. Around 728 he tried to entice an Arab garrison into serving him with a promise of monthly stipends in silver *dirhams* (Ṭabari 2:1518–9; Blankinship 1989, 56). Beckwith (1987, 118, n. 60) identifies Kürşül.
6. The weight of gold is calculated based on the standard Byzantine gold coin, the *solidus*, which weighed about 4.5 grams (Alram 2001, 272–3).
7. A Uighur qaghan claimed to receive five hundred thousand bolts of silk annually from a Tang emperor (Minorsky 1948, 283, 299). The existence of this indemnity is not corroborated by Tang sources, but could refer to the gross receipts of the Tang-Uighur horse trade.
8. For a discussion of this medieval Chinese accounting method, see note 29 below.
9. ZZTJ 211:6706; JTS 103:3187–9; XTS 133:4543–4. In some cases indigenous rulers were appointed as protector-generals. For example, Ashina Mishe and Ashina Buzhen served as co-qaghans and protector-generals after the conquest of the Western Türks in 657 (JTS 194b:5188; XTS 215b:6064; ZZTJ 200:6307–8; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 39, 68–71).
10. XTS misidentifies Guo Qianguan's posting as Taiyuan, Hedong.
11. After the conquest of the Western Türks, Gaozong established an official position at Tingzhou (Beiting) called *canjiang*, to handle correspondence with the submitted tribes (YHJX 40:1033). In 754 Xuanzong dispatched translators and an official seal to the Qarluq chief Tun Bilgä (CFYG 975:23a; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 90–1).
12. From 663 the Tang's protectorate over the Tiele underwent several reorganizations until being renamed Anbei "Pacified North" in 669 (XTS 217a:6112; ZZTJ 198:6246; Xue 1992, 406–7, 422–9). Although the names and locations of protectorates changed, the sites continued to be strategically important garrisons on the major routes across the Gobi Desert. Anbei originally was at Zhongshouxiang at the ford on the northern loop of the Yellow River and was relocated in 685 to the garrison at Juyan Lake in Hexi, the first watering point on the main route to Hexi from Mongolia (see chapter 1, Map 1.4; ZZTJ 200:6301, 203:6435). Anbei's westward shift in location in 685 correlates with the Türk revolts in the Ordos of the early 680s (chapter 9), which may have made the former location untenable.

13. JTS 38:1414–8, 194a:5168–9; XTS 37:975, 215a:6045; YHJX 4:106; ZZTJ 206:6516, 212:6745. All sources describe the inhabitants of the Six Hu Prefectures until 697 as “Türks.” Nonetheless, Pulleyblank argues that *hu* means “Sogdian” in this case (Pulleyblank 1952, 326–31). Depending on context, *hu* can mean barbarian, western barbarian, or Sogdian (Abramson 2003, 149, n. 24). Iwami Kiyohiro proposes a compromise hypothesis that the inhabitants were Turkicized Sogdians (Iwami 2008, 57–9). Regardless of the ethnicity of the inhabitants, the use of the term “Türk” in the Tang sources indicates that they most likely practiced pastoral nomadism.
14. The household and population figures are my calculations based on the individual counts for each bridle prefecture recorded in *Old Tang history* (JTS 38:1414–7, 39:1520–6, 40:1641; Iwami 1998, 151–2). Ethnic groups that made important contributions to the Tang military, but may not have lived a primarily pastoral nomadic lifestyle, such as Koguryans, Sogdians, and Malgal, have been excluded.
15. The language of the statute contains some ambiguity. Iwami plausibly interprets it to mean that wealthy herders only paid the sheep tax, while West Asian merchants were taxed in silver coins (2008, 42–7). Regardless of which reading is correct, pastoral nomadic households doubtlessly were the targets of the sheep tax.
16. Barth’s (1961, 109) careful anthropological study has demonstrated that sixty sheep is the minimum needed to sustain a household’s herd. Below this number family members would consume the flock faster than it could reproduce. Khazanov (1994, 29–30) mentions greater variability in minimum herd size, ranging from 50 to 125, depending on local conditions. This would yield potential tax rates ranging from 0.66 percent (50 sheep) to 0.27 percent (125 sheep).
17. Four hundred cash was the Tang government’s standardized price, which Ikeda (1992, 496–7) demonstrates approximately conformed to known market rates.
18. The tribe can definitively be identified as Turkic based upon the titles of leaders, including a *chor* and *qaghan*. *Corvé* laborers normally were supposed to provide their own provisions except during travel to the work site (Niida 1933, 671 art. 5; Twitchett 1970, 142).
19. In a rare known case, a faction of the Sijie tribe that submitted in northern Hedong in 630 began to practice agriculture, perhaps because they had lost their flocks in the chaotic disintegration of the First Türk Empire (p. 186). Numerous hints in the sources, mentioned throughout this book, provide the impression that pastoral nomadism remained the primary means of subsistence of Turko-Mongols living in Tang bridle prefectures. See, for example, Taizong’s comment that the flocks of Türk bridle tribes had increased abundantly during the 630s (JTS 194a:5163–4; 199b:5344; XTS 215a:6039; ZZTJ 195:6148–9; QTW 10:118).
20. Mongolia has 1,973,400 sq. km. (Krader 1955, 318) and Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Gansu total 105,800,000 hectares or 1,058,000 sq. km. (Committee 1992, 14). This crude comparison—due a lack of comparable data on density of pasture—does not reflect the true carrying capacity of the modern or premodern steppe lands.
21. Standen’s study (2005) indicates that inhabitants of North China were as interested as the Khitan in plundering livestock in the tenth century.
22. When Gao Xianzhi conquered the oasis city of Shāsh in 751, he looted large quantities of gold and lapis lazuli for his personal treasury. Whether aware of Gao’s behavior or not, Xuanzong rewarded Gao for the victory with promotion in rank (JTS 109:3206; XTS 135:4578, 138:4615; ZZTJ 216:6901, 6904).
23. Cheng Zhijie sidetracked his campaign against the Western Türks by ordering the sack of a city. Gaozong demoted Cheng for failure to achieve victory rather than the looting (JTS 83:2777; XTS 111:4136–7, 215b:6062; ZZTJ 199:6299). Zheng Rentai’s campaign against the Tiele in 662 turned into a military disaster after a futile attempt to loot the enemy baggage train. Gaozong rebuked Zheng, but pardoned him (JTS 195:5197–8; ZZTJ 200:6326–9).
24. QJJ 11:5a–b; QTW 286:10a. The Türk court most likely declined the offer because there is no evidence of a joint attack.

25. A memorial of 651 requested that the Tang court supply thirty days of grain rations to six thousand Chuyue, Chumi, and Qibi cavalrymen, to facilitate a rapid attack on the Western Türks (XTS 215b:6060–1; QTW 186:833; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 60–2). On the other hand, self-provisioned Western Türk tribes participated in a campaign in 685 (QTW 211:15a; XTS 107:4071–2).
26. The estimate assumes that each of the thirteen thousand horses at Chishui was issued to a cavalryman. Since Turko-Mongol households typically comprised a nuclear family headed by an adult male capable of mounted archery (Barfield 1993, 100–4, 147; Sinor 1981, 134–5), the bridle tribes of the region could have supplied five thousand horsemen.
27. The Khitan were supposed to attack from the east, the Basmil from the west, and Tang regular forces and bridle tribe auxiliaries from the south. The campaign failed in part because the Khitan did not arrive in Mongolia as promised (ZZTJ 212:6742–3; CFYG 986:17a–19a; TZLJB 33:1498). This apparently was connected to domestic strife, perhaps precipitated by the planned military campaign, which resulted in the death of the Khitan king (JTS 199b:5352; XTS 219:6170; ZZTJ 212:6743).
28. After Türk campaigns against the Khitan in 722 and Qay in 723 (see chapter 1, Table 1.4), Xuanzong apparently sent the silk as a post-conflict reward (CFYG 975:3b, 979:6b–7a; TZLJB 33:1483).
29. The cloth-grain-coin accounting unit considered bolts of silk and hemp cloth, hanks of silk floss, *shi* of grain (60 liters or 1.75 bushels), and strings of one thousand bronze coins to be equivalent in value. Although actual exchange rates varied, extant contemporary figures demonstrate that these quantities of goods had prices within a range of  $\pm 100$  cash. Despite these and other small discrepancies in the data, it seems prudent to estimate military spending at roughly one quarter of the Tang budget in the mid-eighth century (Skaff 1998b, 82–6).
30. For example, during the Xianqing reign period (1041–48), which involved tensions with the Liao and Xi Xia, the Northern Song army included more than 1.25 million men (Wang 1995, 395–6, 771–5).
31. All data in the table are cited in this chapter with the exception of the numbers of Khitan and Qay troops, which are mentioned in chapter 1.
32. The differential in cost per soldier on offensive campaigns seems to be connected to the distances involved. The failed Khitan attack against the Türks in 720 would have required travel from Manchuria to Mongolia, while the Qay campaign of 732 was against the neighboring Khitan.
33. The frontier armies had 80,000 horses in 742 (ZZTJ 215:6847–51; JTS 38:1385–9; TD 172:4479–83; XTS 40:1046–7). An estimate for the Tang postal relay system in the early eighth century is 60,000 horses based on the prescribed numbers of horses at the empire's network of 1,383 postal stations (1,297 land and 86 land-waterway facilities). Land stations were classified into seven grades with horse quotas ranging from a minimum of 23 at small provincial posts to a maximum of 75 at capital facilities (TLD 5:32b–34a; XTS 46:1198; Rotours 110–12; Maspero 1953, 89–92). Taking the median prescribed number of horses, 45, and multiplying it by the 1,383 postal stations, yields a rough estimate of 62,235 postal relay horses. The number of steeds and pack animals assigned to the palace, government offices and shipping system are unknown, must have amounted to tens of thousands or more.
34. Qing horses at frontier garrisons had the heaviest replacement rate at 30 percent annually. Attrition was lower for other types of service (Perdue 2005, 355). Based on Qing statistics, the Tang's 80,000 frontier garrison horses in the eighth century would have required 24,000 replacements annually. The Northern Song, having a less extensive empire than the Tang, was estimated to need 22,000 new horses every year (Smith 1991, 16).
35. A model Tang expeditionary army as composed of 20,000 regular troops, but one Tang expedition of known size in Inner Asia included 30,000 regular troops and 50,000 Uighur

- cavalry who presumably supplied their own horses. The mainly infantry campaigns against Koguryō, involving 100,000 to 300,000 troops, must have required fewer horses per man (Graff 2002a, 145–56, 192–200).
36. Stallions apparently were included in ranch population figures until 719, when an edict ordered ranches to conserve fodder by placing the studs in army service except during the spring breeding season (CFYG 621:24b–25a). A report of 280,000 mares in 754 (CFYG 621:25b) is inconsistent with the other sources. The age of juveniles (*ju*) is difficult to fix precisely. The *Comprehensive dictionary of the Chinese language* (Luo 1990–4, 12:817), defines *ju* as yearling (one-year-old) but Tang administrative statutes convey the meaning of foal (under a year old) which is Johnson’s translation (TLD 17:26a–27b; TLSY 15:275–7; Johnson 1997, 178–81). Further complicating the picture, some young horses could remain at the ranches as late as three years of age, depending on the needs of official agencies (TLD 17:25b, 29a).
  37. XTS 48:1253–5, 50:1337–8; TLD 17:23b–30a; TLSY 15:275–7; Johnson 1997, 178–81; Ma and Wang 1995, 9–15; Maspero 1953, 88; Rotours 1974, 390–403, 884–92. Johnson translates *mujian* as “supervisor” and Hucker as “pasturage director” (Hucker 1985, 203, 336). Overseers of herds (*muwei*), who supervised fifteen herds each, worked under the directors of herds (*mujian*). Johnson translates *muwei* as “pasture marshal.”
  38. Despite the usefulness of the Smith thesis, it does not explain the significant Sui to mid-Tang fluctuations in herd size, which I discuss elsewhere (Skaff 2011).
  39. *The Tang Code* established penalties for violations of size and quality standards (TLSY 26:497–8, no. 418; Johnson 1997, 480).
  40. The provenance of textiles mentioned in medieval textual sources is uncertain because silk was produced in East and West Asia, and at oases in Inner Asia (Watt and Wardwell, eds. 1997). The First Türk Empire famously employed Sogdians to sell Chinese silk to Sasanian Iran and Byzantium in the sixth century, but thereafter in the seventh through ninth centuries there is no direct evidence of Turkic involvement in long-distance trade (La Vaissière 2005, 227–37, 306–12).
  41. XTS 46:1129; Ma and Wang 1995, 73–5; Rotours 1974, 77–8; Twitchett 1966, 223–4. The English translation of *hushi jian* is based upon Rotours (1974, 475). Hucker (1985, 259) translates *hushi jian* misleadingly as Directorate of Tributary Trade. Tang sources describe the *hushi jian* overseeing trade (*jiaoyi*), but avoid the language of tributary relations (TLD 22:29b–30a; XTS 48:1272; JTS 44:1895).
  42. The herds appear in two different postal system registers recording the amounts of fodder provided to visiting horses. One is from the Jiaohe Commandery (Xizhou) Long-Distance-Depot (73TAM506:4/32–1 in TCWS 10:55–75; TCWS—plates 4:421–36, lns. 29, 30, 140, 193, 198) and the other is an unknown postal station probably in the vicinity of Xizhou (73TAM506:4/32–15 in TCWS 10:165–88; TCWS—plates 4:499–512, lns. 3, 29, 169).
  43. When Tang frontier officials purchased horses from a seller, scribes apparently issued a receipt (*chao*) on a sheet of paper recording the total number of horses and amount paid. One extant receipt notes the purchase of three horses from a single seller (see note 50 below). Scribes also needed paper for registers recording multiple purchases on a single date (see note 49 below).
  44. Aside from evidence cited below in this chapter, a few other surviving figures corroborate the horse prices in the market register. A six-year-old gelding sold for eighteen bolts of wide-loom tabby silk in a private transaction at Xizhou in 733 (73TAM509:8/10 in TCWS 9:48–9; TCWS—plates 4:279; Yamamoto and Ikeda 1987, #32; Trombert and La Vaissière 2007, 4–5, 30–1). A century later, a Tang official’s estimate of the cost of horses in Hexi—twenty bolts for a superior horse and fifteen bolts for an inferior one—also falls within the range of the market register (THY 66:1146).

45. Translations of textile terminology here and elsewhere are based on discussions with scholars at the “Textiles as Money Workshop,” Yale University, October 1–4, 2009.
46. Xuanzong made this claim in a letter of 721 to Bilgä Qaghan. Xuanzong alluded to the trade having ended thirty or forty years earlier (ZZTJ 212:6744; CFYG 980:7b–8a; TZLJB 33:1499). Forty years earlier was 681, the time of the Türk revolts in the Ordos (chapter 9).
47. 72TAM188:89(a) in TCWS 8:84; TCWS—plates 4:40. The date of the document has been lost, but is attributable to the early eighth century because it was found in tomb TAM188 with other documents written between 706 and 716 (TCWS 8:52; TCWS—plates 4:24). One seller in this document, Hulu Tarqan, might even be the “chief” named “Hulu” who submitted to the Tang in autumn 714 (CFYG 977:19b).
48. 72 TAM 188:71, 79 in TCWS 8:67–8; TCWS—plates 4:31–2. The document resembles an official request to regional headquarters to buy supplies at the local market (Naitō 1960, 52–89).
49. 72TAM188:88/1–8 in TCWS 8:88–9; TCWS—plates 4:42. This document appears to be a register noting the type, age, color, price and seller of each animal purchased. Although similar to the register described in Tang regulations (TLD 22:30a), it includes non-prescribed information on the price and seller, and omits stipulated information on the height. For the dating of documents in this tomb, see note 47 above.
50. 72 TAM 188:87(a) in TCWS 8:87; TCWS—plates 4:41. The editors identify this document as a receipt (*chao*). For the dating of documents in this tomb, see note 47 above.
51. Another document shows twenty-one strings of cash being used to purchase an unknown number of horses (72 TAM 188:84 in TCWS 8:85; TCWS—plates 4:40). The silk-coin exchange rate is based on the known equivalency of 400 cash per bolt at Luntai in 728 (Ikeda 1979, 355; Yongxing Wang 1994, 321–6). A string of 1,000 cash weighed 6 *jin*, 4 *liang* (about 4.1 kilograms) during the Tang (Peng 1994, 293–4).
52. Another fragmentary document from the same tomb mentions a “Türgish chieftain Duohai” lending militarily assistance to the Tang to pursue a “large number of bandits [enemies]” (72 TAM 188:85 in TCWS 8:86; TCWS—plates 4:41). The Türgish were a bridge tribe on and off during the early eighth century (chapter 6).
53. Ast.III.3.10, Ast.III.3.9, Ast.III.3.08.07, Ast.III.3.037 in Chen 1995, 192–209. Chen Guocan argues that the documents are closely related because of a common scribal signature. Chen’s transcriptions of Chinese correct some errors in Maspero (1953, 113–29). As a result of Maspero’s misreading of some paleography, his translations are not entirely reliable.
54. It does not seem likely that the emperor bestowed thirty bolts of monetary silk, which, based on the discussion in this chapter, could only buy two ordinary horses on the north-western frontier.
55. Ton Yabghu Qaghan of the Western Türks delivered five thousand horses when he proposed marriage to a Tang princess in 628 (ZZTJ 192:6046).
56. 72TAM188:86(a) in TCWS 8:82; TCWS—plates 4:39. For the dating of documents in this tomb, see note 47 above.
57. The information is recorded in a legal document concerning a driver who deviated from his route home without authorization (73TAM509:8/8(a), 8/16(a), 8/14(a), 8/21(a), 8/15(a) in TCWS 9:58–65; TCWS—plates 4:288–93; Arakawa 1992, 40–5, 2001, 12–18).
58. The letters, issued as edicts, were composed by Zhang Jiuling, who served at Xuanzong’s court between 731 and 736 (Herbert 1978, 21–7). The edicts can be dated more precisely to 735 or 736 because they mention the “former qaghan”—Bilgä Qaghan was poisoned in 734—and the enthronement of the new qaghan “last year,” evidently 734 or 735 (JTS 8:202; ZZTJ 214:6809).
59. The rate was 38.46 bolts per horse in 809, the only year when the quantities of horses and silk are both recorded (Beckwith 1991, 188–9, n.15; Jagchid 1989; Mackerras 1969, 238–9).

## Chapter 9

1. The sources attribute the revolt solely to heavy taxation (JTS 194a:5158, 5160–1; XTS 215a:6038; ZZTJ 192:6049–50).
2. In North China during the years of Türk incorporation into the Tang Empire, drought occurred in 639, 647, 648, 650, 660, 668, and 670. Years of cold were 651, 659, and 670. Famine is mentioned only in 668 and 670 (ZZTJ 195:6147, 199:6266, 201:6357, 6365; Song 1992, 159, 171, 200, 205). The two major clusters of unfavorable weather in this period—647 to 651 and 668 to 670—paled in intensity to the unfavorable conditions from 677 to 682 described below.
3. The skin of the soldiers is described as chapped and cracked, which apparently indicates frostbite (JTS 194a:5166; XTS 215a:6042; ZZTJ 202:6392).
4. Tang breeding ranches in the Ordos lost 184,900 horses, 11,600 cattle, and 800 herds personnel between October 679 and May 681 (ZZTJ 202:6402; CFYG 621:24a; THY 72:1302; XTS 50:1338; Rotours 1974, 893).
5. Xuanzong seems to have placed the blame on Sulu because the emperor promoted Du to grand councilor (JTS 98:3076, 194b:5191; XTS 126:4421, 215b:6067; ZZTJ 213:6775). Beckwith's narrative of events (1987, 98) is inaccurate because he mistranslates *jiao* as "proselytize." In this context *jiao* means "the decree of a prince or a princess" (TLD 1:25b; XTS 46:1185; Rotours 1974, 22).
6. Plotting rebellion was considered to be the most heinous Tang crime (Johnson 1979, 18). Only direct participants in the rebellion were to be decapitated. A rebel's father and adult sons were to be strangled, and remaining extended family members exiled or enslaved (TLSY 17:321–3, art. 248; Johnson 1997, 239–42). Strangulation was considered to be a less severe penalty than decapitation because it kept the body intact in accordance with Confucian precepts (Johnson 1979, 59, n. 74). Unless the entire family actually was involved in a plot, Xuanzong appears to have exceeded the letter of Tang law.
7. Pulleyblank (1956, 39–40) discusses a number of contradictions in chronology and detail in the sources (JTS 185:5198; XTS 217b:6143; ZZTJ 215:6854, 6860; THY 98:2068; CFYG 971:15a–b; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 85–6, n. 4; [1904] 1969, 76). Xuanzong's earlier investiture of the Qarluq ruler, Tun Bilgä, is mentioned in passing in an edict of 753 (CFYG 965:5b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 88).
8. Even though literati Confucians generally discouraged militarism and worked to marginalize martial rites at court, Tang emperors eagerly engaged in martial rituals until the latter part of the dynasty (McMullen 1987, 195, 225–7; 1989).
9. The translation is based on the version of the speech in JTS 194b:5187. Variant renderings clarify that Helu requested to be executed at Zhaoling (XTS 215b:6063; ZZTJ 200:6310; Chavannes [1900] 1969, 37–38, 66).
10. Xu Jingzong was familiar with other aspects of the Eastern Zhou war triumph, such as the victorious troops proffering the left ears of enemy dead, the ruler recompensing his soldiers with ceremonial drinking, and the recording of meritorious service. On the ancient ritual, see Lewis 1990, 26.
11. Archaeological discoveries of large numbers of human sacrifices at Shang tombs strongly suggest that war captives were killed during burials of deceased rulers (Lewis 1990, 26–7).
12. A similar dynamic existed in the tenth and eleventh centuries (Standen 2007, 72–175).

## Conclusion

1. Waldron (1990, 76–83) notes that early Ming generals were aware of the strategic necessity of an Inner Mongolian garrison system, but the problems feeding troops forced their withdrawal. In contrast, earlier Tang frontier supply efforts were more successful (Skaff



- 1998b, 242–62). A plausible hypothesis is that the cooler and drier climate of Late Imperial China, mentioned in chapter 2, impeded agriculture in the Ming-Inner Asia borderlands.
2. The current trend in scholarship is divided between world historians who lend weight to interconnections (Duchesne 2005; Mazlish 2005) and comparative historians and historical sociologists who emphasize “robust processes” arising in response to similar causal factors in different locations (Scheidel 2009, 4–6). Weber (1968, 226–35) regarded patrionialism as a universal related to the ubiquity of patriarchal social organization in agricultural societies.
  3. Japan’s interactions with Eurasia involved complex and multidirectional exchanges with various states on the Korean peninsula and dynasties of China. Japan adopted Buddhism and the full spectrum of Eastern Eurasian political and diplomatic norms, including the ideology of Heaven-mandated rule, monumental architecture, and hierarchical status ranking signaled with color-coded robes (Piggott 1997, 79–99, 131–61).
  4. Thomas Allsen (1997, 2001, 2006) and Patrick Manning (1996) have inspired this systematic approach.
  5. Unfortunately, Canepa introduces his new concept of “agonistic exchange” without engaging the earlier scholarship on competitive emulation.
  6. Confucian nativism became ingrained into Song imperial identity as its empire stood in opposition to the dynasts who ruled the China-Inner Asia borderlands (Leung 2003; Skaff 2000, 2004).

### *Appendices*

1. At this time the Tang controlled a relatively small portion of its future empire. The court would have lacked means to gather information about attacks on territory outside of its jurisdiction. Moreover, the paucity of raids recorded from 618 to 620 seems unrealistic when compared to the explosion of known attacks from 621 to 626.



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